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TUCKER, JOHN ALAN. Charley's Aunt in Summer Repertory. (1974)
Directed by: Dr. Herman Middleton. Pp. 211.

This thesis is a record of a Summer Repertory production of Charley's Aunt, by Brandon Thomas. It is divided into a pre-production analysis of the play and the production conditions, a prompt book, and a critical evaluation.

Part I pays special attention to the particular challenges of Repertory theatre, and establishes the production style. Part II records the details of the production performed in the Theatre of the W. Raymond Taylor Drama and Speech Building on June 27 and 29, and July 1, 7, 12, 15 and 19, 1973. It consists of a prompt book with the usual notations, supplemented by ground plans and production photographs. Part III analyzes strengths and weaknesses; it concludes that a novel approach can be remarkably successful.

CHARLEY'S AUNT IN SUMMER REPERTORY

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by

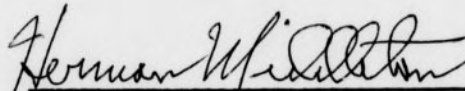
John Alan Tucker

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A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
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Approved by



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APPROVAL SHEET

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PART I

PRE-PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

The Situation

When this director was given the opportunity of producing one of the plays in the Department, it had already been established that the script was to offer an opportunity to light in color--and a Directorial choice. The light of the stage--the most visible choice of play seemed to be particularly light fare, so that prospective audience would view the scenes as one which could be enjoyed rather than feared. In the tradition of modernism the director was aware of the fact that the script was not only a light fare, but a play particularly

PART I

PRE-PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

Especial Considerations

Summer Repertory: The Premiere Season

Inception

Summer of 1973 may be something of a landmark in Greensboro, for UNC-G Theatre presented the premiere season of its Summer Repertory Company, a project considered and fostered for some time. The company provided an internship for finishing graduate students, and was staffed mainly by them, from UNC-G and other universities. The Repertory had been conceived with the aim of producing an opera and two or more plays, to be performed in rotation over a four-week period which paralleled both terms of summer school; in fact, it was a part of the Summer Session Divertissement programme.

Play Selection

When this director was given the opportunity of producing one of the plays in the Repertory, it had already been established that the season was to offer an opera--probably light in nature--and a Tennessee Williams drama, The Night of the Iguana. The most suitable choice of play seemed to be particularly light fare, so that prospective audiences would view the season as one which would be amusing rather than demanding, in the tradition of summer theatre; the drama and opera choices suggested that not only was light fare required, but a play particularly

well-known, especially since the season was to be a premiere one. Melodrama--as it might have been performed in the old West--was considered, as were classic farces such as See How They Run and Arsenic and Old Lace. The many considerations of available time, unusual casting procedures, the nature of the Repertory itself, and other possible problems were recognised in making a final choice. Thinking of the well-known, the decision was taken to offer Charley's Aunt as the opening production of the season.

Although Charley's Aunt presented several challenges (not the least of which was the requirement of three different settings, which had to be considered in the light of settings for the other two productions) it seemed to have a suitable cast size (ten) with an equitable male-female (6:4) ratio. Considerations about the likely availability of cast were particularly important, as it had never been established how many actors would be available. Although seven actors were to be paid members of the Repertory company, each with a major role in one of the two plays, and a minor role in the other play, the rest of the cast would come from auditions after the paid company came together, and would probably be composed of students enrolled in the Summer Session, UNC-G students not enrolled at present but spending the summer in Greensboro, and, in the tradition of UNC-G Theatre, townsmen of Greensboro.

Casting

Preliminary auditions were held for several likely actors and actresses, both from the point of view of paid staff and students in

the Summer Session. The opportunity to attend the Southeastern Theatre Conference auditions in Pensacola, Florida, enabled the directors to see and hear brief audition pieces from over five hundred actors wanting work in the summer. Of course, UNC-G Repertory Theatre was only one of some thirty companies seeking talent at this time. Callbacks and re-audition procedures narrowed the field considerably, but a considerable number of suitably qualified actors applied for positions. At this time, those eligible were graduate students who were completing work for a degree or who had just graduated. A further consideration was the desirability of having one or two young professional actors in the company, and an advertisement in Backstage brought a flood of applications. Judgments in this instance had to be made on far from infallible criteria. Applicants submitted photographs, resumes, and professional recommendations, as well as audio-tapes demonstrating vocal interpretations of roles. Final decisions resulted in hiring five actors for principal roles in Charley's Aunt and two for The Night of the Iguana; the rationale was the availability of two excellent actresses, suited to roles in the latter play, who would definitely be enrolling in the Summer Session to work in the Repertory Company. Of the seven, two were hired as a result of the Backstage advertisement, and five from the Southeastern Theatre Conference auditions.

No final allotment of roles was made until the general auditions on June 4, the day the company assembled, though actors were naturally hired with a major role in mind. It was fortunate that as many actors had been hired, for the number of students and townsmen who

appeared at tryouts was far below that number who audition for plays in the major season. As it turned out, further tryouts had to be held the next day before casting could be completed. Final casting meant facing the advantages and disadvantages of working with a cast composed of professionals, finishing graduate students, and students of UNC-G, both graduate and undergraduate. Naturally a wide range of acting ability and experience existed, but it was hoped that the wider experience of some of the actors would work for the good of the cast as a whole.

Time

Limitations of time in terms of a rehearsal period was another of the problems faced in this particular production. The company had assembled for a total of seven weeks of which just over three weeks was devoted to rehearsals. Of course, in contrast with the major season, the cast was available for rehearsals both day and night. Still, most actors had two distinct roles to prepare, many lines to learn, and rehearsals had to be carefully planned to avoid conflicts between each of the three productions, and to allow sufficient time for the actors to work on their roles.

Time, in another sense, was also a problem once the season had opened, for the schedule meant that there were often extended gaps between successive performances of the same play. For example, the Sunday, July 1 matinee of Charley's Aunt was followed by an evening performance on Saturday, July 7. Additional rehearsals at the discretion of the director had to be included in the general production schedule, though it was hoped that most of these would be unnecessary. Some were

held, not only for dealing with gaps between performances, but more especially dealing with performance problems. Changes in audience reaction, minor variations in acting and technical difficulties in a particular performance are standard problems, especially when playing comedy. These had to be dealt with at the additional rehearsals.

Apart from organisational problems concerning the actors' difficulties of coping with Repertory, rehearsal schedules, and directorial problems of working with a cast of vastly differing ability and experience, this director saw another particular problem in coping with all technical aspects of the production of Charley's Aunt. On the credit side, the designers and stage manager were all part of the paid company, and they had excellently enthusiastic crews to put their ideas into practice. However, the designers found the problems of inexperienced help--an inability to interpret working drawings, for example--and the difficulties of mounting three productions in such a short space of time, a mammoth one.

From the director's point of view, there was insufficient opportunity to consult with designers before the rehearsal period began. Perhaps the primary reason was that the company first met only the day before rehearsals were scheduled to begin. Could designers, or any other staff, have legitimately been expected to work before June 4? However, set and costume designs worked well together, and the director's conception of the play was reasonably suited to the conceptions of both set and costume designers. They had a difficult task as they were responsible for the construction of three productions, as

well as their design.

The nature of this Repertory Company also meant that the stage manager had responsibilities as a technical assistant, which took up a good deal of his time. Assistant stage managers had to be found for the three productions, to substitute for him, and he intended attending as many rehearsals as he could. This was an unusual departure from normal production procedure, and meant that he would not be as familiar with the production of Charley's Aunt as he otherwise might have been.

Two Other Concerns

The Play

Charley's Aunt is a world-famous farce, probably as popular today as it was in 1892. Nonetheless, there were many problems associated with its production in Greensboro in 1973. First of all, the play is particularly well-known, and it would not have been presumptuous to expect that a goodly number of the audience would have seen the play at least once before. From this director's experience, productions of this play are often gross misrepresentations of the nature of the play, and even of tasteful theatre. In the hands of some, what is a mixture of farce and almost high comedy becomes something of a free-for-all, an opportunity to gain laughs at any cost. As a result, the style of the production had to be sufficiently humorous to entertain even the most unsophisticated audience--and this is not difficult considering the plot alone--yet it still had to titillate even the connoisseur of Victorian comedy. The play is one which "treads the tightrope of absurdity and alights safely at the end without tumbling into the

fatuous,"¹ asserts George Rowell. The very problem of the fatuous was one this director hoped to avoid; it is all too-ready a trap as he will demonstrate later in this thesis.

In addition, the play is very much a period piece, and many of the subtle pieces of humour rely upon somewhat archaic jokes or idiom; it was hoped that the production style would not make these too difficult to understand, rather enhance them, or point them up with visual business, so that they would be readily understood by a modern audience. As well as clarification, at least the feeling of the period had to be conveyed to the audience in terms of movement, gesture and vocal approach.

Vocal approach to the actors' roles was particularly important. The director was especially conscious of directing a play with an essentially English flavour while a visitor to America. He made no attempt to drill the cast in an exact reproduction of English speech, but rather suggested standardizing certain pronunciations and vowel sounds, and developing a suitably crisp rhythm. This, he believed, would be effective in establishing locale and period.

Having chosen Charley's Aunt as a production, a final thought concerned the use of the proscenium arch stage. The play was written for this type of theatre, yet the director believed the play would profit from a greater degree of intimacy than this barrier afforded. An audience of the late nineteenth century would have been more than

¹George Rowell, The Victorian Theatre: A Survey (London: Oxford University Press, 1956) p. 112.

delighted to chuckle from afar at the antics of Lord Fancourt Babberley and his undergraduate friends; a modern audience might well demand a greater degree of involvement. The director and designer had an idea which they believed would keep the flavour of a proscenium arch period, while promoting a more intimate physical relationship with the audience; this will be discussed in the section dealing with sets and costumes.

The Theatre

When choosing his play, and especially when establishing his production style, the director looked at the advantages and disadvantages of the theatre in which he had to work. The theatre in Taylor Building has seating which relates more closely to the proscenium arch theatre than any other, yet the theatre is most unusual in its design and provides a surprising amount of flexibility in spite of its fixed seating arrangement.

It remains essentially a modified proscenium arch theatre, yet has extensions on stage right and stage left which wrap around the first rows of seating, and provide additional very useful playing areas, enabling large casts to work more effectively in musicals, for example, or even providing the opportunity for physical change of locale simplifying the design of multi-set productions. The theatre has quite a considerable apron area, which may be further extended by the use of the orchestra pit raised to stage level. This provides the sense of a thrust stage, further accentuated by the seating design which, in its turn, wraps around the pit area in a curve opposing the extensions. The theatre may also be used as a conventional proscenium

theatre by the addition of tormentors and a teaser. A wide variety of choices is, then, available to the director.

Charley's Aunt did not require the additional space offered by the stage right and left extensions; indeed, the director felt that using only the central area of the entire stage would enhance the intimacy he intended to establish with the audience. Neither did he believe a transformation to a standard proscenium arch would do anything but work against this aim, so the action was kept downstage as far as possible. The sets were designed with this factor in mind; they did not attempt to use more than roughly half the depth of the stage. On the other hand, the director was not inclined to use the full apron possibilities for an acting area, for he believed the curved nature of the seating in the first few rows would provide too many problems with sight lines when he was blocking the play. He was reluctant to rule out a considerable number of seats from the box plans, for the anticipated audience for the season was very much a matter of a guess at that planning stage. Establishment of a restricted acting area in this manner would, he believed, add a degree of intimacy to his production, and the opportunity for the actors to make the most of a presentational style, with the majority of the blocking as close to the audience as possible, but consistent with the aim of providing good sightlines from any seat in the house.

A Glance at the Past

Toward the Nineties

At the middle of the nineteenth century, the only hope of the English theatre appeared to be the past; "its orientation was still towards the Elizabethans and towards such men as Browning who were prepared to turn out poetic dramas."² This is the contention of Allardyce Nicoll, who maintains it was the

. . . very greatness of Shakespeare and of the other Elizabethans that dimmed the eyes of the critics and of the creative writers to the necessity of looking, not to the past, but to the present and to the future. It was the Shakespearian poetic play which provided the greatest hindrance to the development of prose drama in the age. The romantic poets thought that they could become a set of second Shakespeares; yet, if they only could have known it, the true representatives of the Elizabethan in the nineteenth century, and those whom, we feel, Shakespeare himself would have welcomed, were the writers of the melodrama and the farce.³

The theatre was indeed at a low ebb, with dramas seldom penetrating the level of stock characters and superficial ideas. Boucicault achieved much popularity in the second half of the nineteenth century, and considerable financial success, probably because of his sensational-ism, and love of spectacle. T. W. Robertson's work, including Society of 1864 and Caste of 1867, were among the first to lead toward realism. He dealt with contemporary society and placed much emphasis on realism in his productions.

²Allardyce Nicoll, A History of Early Nineteenth Century Drama: 1800 - 1850, 2 vols. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), vol. 1, p. 211.

³Ibid., p. 216.

The box set, popularised by Charles Fechter,⁴ who revived an interest in it in the sixties and seventies, was also a feature of the period. Fechter also favoured a more realistic acting style. Similar work in the theatre was encouraged by the Bancrofts in conjunction with Robertson. Henry Irving's work as a producer did much for sophisticated three-dimensional scenery, and for stage lighting--by the end of the century.

Probably then, Charley's Aunt would have been first performed in box sets, at least for Acts I and III which are interiors; Act II in the garden may well have been of a wing-drop nature. The acting style would have been realistic, at least in the sense the word had at the time. It was a kind of pictorial realism, and

. . . of course, the idea of realism in the 1860's could still involve a strong portion of the artificial. Robertson was extremely partial to the dramatic tableau, and quite willing to employ soliloquies, asides, even gags that contributed little either to plot or character. The flavour of burlesque or melodrama was thus not banned from his works.⁵

So realism hardly had today's meaning in the second half of the nineteenth century. In relation to Allardyce Nicoll's comments, the director agreed that the Elizabethans were indeed closer to the humour of nineteenth century farce, and were closer to their audiences than were the serious dramatists of the last century.

⁴Richard Southern, The Victorian Theatre: A Pictorial Survey (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1970), p. 87.

⁵Marvin Carlson, "Montigny, Laube, Robertson: The Early Realists," Educational Theatre Journal XXIV (October, 1972): 233.

Among other factors, considerations of intimacy, the setting, and realism led this director to a considerably different approach to the style of presentation, and no attempt was made to recreate the production which delighted audiences on that pre-Christmas evening at the Royalty in 1892, and continued to do so for a subsequent four years.

A Delicate Subject

Is Irving to quit the stage without attempting an Ibsen part? However that may be, the time is approaching when the Norwegian drama will pay. Not, of course, like Charley's Aunt! One must not expect too much when one has only genius. Ibsen can and should keep alive without robbing or coveting a single one of lucky Mr. Penley's spectators.⁶

While stressing the popularity of Charley's Aunt, M. Filon still has a decided petulance in his remarks, indicating that he considers the play comparatively worthless. However, the play is still incredibly popular today, particularly considering its lightweight nature, and the lack of examination of any deep issues.

Perhaps Brandon Thomas (1857 - 1914) had learned his lesson with the production of his play The Gold Craze in 1889. The melodrama, according to the London Echo was

. . . a very ordinary transpotine melodrama, in which a foreign villain commits a murder in the first act; sends the hero--whose matronly wife he loves, in his villain-like way--to Africa, lures him then to a French prison, plots for his murder by the prison officials, under cover of effecting his escape for the aforesaid wife's sake; and finally returns to Old England to be exposed by the adjutant villain, who knew his secret all along, and with

⁶ Quoted in Augustin Filon, The English Stage: Being an Account of the Victorian Drama by Augustin Filon, trans. by Frederic Whyte (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1969), p. 284.

whom he would not 'play square', and so to be handed over to the police just in the good old way.⁷

Yet Thomas tried to embellish this plot with foreign labour issues, the under-payment of clerks, and other ideas which were dismissed as "leaden sermonettes".⁸ It appeared that social and more particularly economic issues had little place in the popular melodrama of the late nineteenth century.

Charley's Aunt was, of course, a vastly different matter. It opened on Wednesday, December 21, 1892 with Brandon Thomas in the role of Col. Sir Francis Chesney, and played for some 1,466 performances, a record unbroken for more than a quarter of a century. But this play was a far cry from the earlier effort of the writer who "held many a London drawing-room enthralled with his rendering of negro melodies, and showed his sound Yorkshire sense by marrying the only daughter of a rich diamond merchant."⁹ It has no pretension to social criticism, nor does it deal with thematic or indeed any issues beyond the scope of telling a rattling good story.

The most striking aspect of the play, as an audience remembers it, is the young Oxford undergraduate dressed up in the guise of a Brazilian millionairess; Lord Fancourt Babberley posing as Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez, Charley's aunt. Yet when the play was presented in the 1890's, a man in woman's clothing was considered by some to be rather

⁷Quoted in Harold Hobson, Verdict at Midnight: Sixty Years of Dramatic Criticism (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1952), p. 9.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

risqué. Of the 1830's, however, Allardyce Nicoll reports that in

. . . The Winterbottoms! or My Aunt, the Dowager (Strand, June 1837) both Frank Jekyll and his man Jeffrey impersonate the Dowager Lady Winterbottom, the former succeeding eventually in winning the hand of Celestine. The equivocal situations may be left to the imagination; they anticipate by half a century those which still excite laughter in Charley's Aunt.¹⁰

Many popular plays of the first half of the nineteenth century--and earlier--ran on the situation of mistaken sexual identity. It seems odd that such a change of attitude should have taken place by the nineties; still, Hobson says: "Bright and engaging actresses masquerading as men, however, whatever they may have been to the critics, appear to have given pleasure to the public and to the dramatists."¹¹ At Drury Lane, special actors were hired for the pantomime dame, and attractive young ladies for the principal boy, and this was established first in the 1880's, so perhaps it was the sensibility of the critics and their circle, rather than the reaction of the general public.

The critic of the Daily Graphic wrote of Charley's Aunt:

. . . A delightful and diverting mid-winter frolic is the best description of Mr. Brandon Thomas's three-act farce with which Mr. W. S. Penley began his season at the Royalty last night. Not a gleam of reason or sanity is there in the whole, the action of which is as preposterous as it is amusing. All is, however, excellent in taste. The thinnest of ice is crossed without a suggestion of danger, and a light chord of sympathy is even struck.¹²

The general concensus of opinion appears to have been that although it

¹⁰ Allardyce Nicoll, Early Nineteenth Century Drama, pp. 131-2.

¹¹ Harold Hobson, Verdict at Midnight, p. 27.

¹² Quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 24-5.

was a highly delicate matter altogether, the performance was handled most tastefully. Hobson mentions W. S. Penley who was, at the opening of Charley's Aunt,

. . . already a popular comedian. He had had a strong ecclesiastical background, having been a choir boy at the Chapel Royal, Savoy. From there he had moved to a church in Charles Street, Westminster, and later--this was the decisive influence in his career--to the choir of the Bedford Street Chapel in Bloomsbury. The clergyman was the Rev. J. M. Bellew. This eloquent divine, impressive in surplice and cassock, and richly indulging in theatrical gesture, fired Penley's enthusiasm for dressing up, an enthusiasm that was now to be abundantly satisfied in the voluminous skirts and ample wig of the masquerading Donna Lucia.¹³

Perhaps it was fortunate inasmuch as Penley's background was so far above reproach in its connection with the church, for the critic of the Daily Graphic was not the only one to believe that transvestism was a risky element to include in a production.

Another critic (in the Globe) said:

. . . The subject of Mr. Thomas's play is a little risky, carrying back the recollection of theatregoers to a time when just exception was taken by those farthest removed from the Puritan strain to certain proceedings witnessed at times on the stage. So great was the outcry against the practice of low comedians masquerading as women that this class of performance was, in answer to public demand, practically stopped.

In Charley's Aunt, the chief drollery of the piece turns on a man presenting a woman. While as whimsical and diverting as it can be, however, the performance is as innocent and void of offence as the antics of a clown in the pantomime donning a bonnet and shawl.¹⁴

The Daily Graphic, however, best summed up the critics' reaction to the play and the particular performance in the following words:

¹³Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 26.

It is at once obvious that a plot of this kind requires delicate treatment. Coarseness, such as was common a generation ago in the presentation of women by men, would have secured the immediate dismissal of the play. Fortunately, nothing of the kind is present. The whole is as innocent as it is delightful.

Mr. Penley's performance of the fictitious Donna Lucia is as fine a piece of comedy as our stage often exhibits. It is no mere piece of grimace and display of facial power. It is genuine comedy of a high order. His blandness and suavity, his feminine airs and graces, his demure placid exterior, and the occasional assertion beneath of truculent manhood, are irresistible. Nothing the clever actor has ever done conveys a higher estimate of his powers.¹⁵

A Basis for Work

Plot

Charley's Aunt, in spite of all its other qualities, is primarily concerned with telling an amusing and effective, if often improbable, story. In many productions of the play seen by this director, the story played an extraordinarily secondary role, the main object being to get as much slapstick humour as possible from the idea of the man masquerading in feminine clothing, and any other opportunity to exploit silliness when it arose. This was often to the detriment of the production, for the audience did not fully understand the action of the play; however, it must be admitted that superficial enjoyment on the audience's part was often still quite enough to make them satisfied with the evening. In reviewing a production by Jose Ferrer on Broadway, the Theatre Arts critic wrote: "To say that the production was something short of close-meshed, as a few of the critics did, is to miss the point of Ferrer's own freewheeling direction, and the rather

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 25-6.

obvious conclusion that in 1954 the ingredients of this plot lend themselves only to burlesque."¹⁶ Certainly an audience enjoys a production of this play which stresses the burlesque elements to the exclusion of everything else, but this director's production attempted to convey both the broader elements of humour, while making certain the audience understood and enjoyed the plot of the play.

By way of example, the one really prominent scene of the play offered to the actress playing Ela is that where she reveals her real feelings about Lord Fancourt Babberley to that very personage in disguise as Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez. The actor playing Lord Fancourt may be very tempted to overplay his reactions to what she says, and introduce irrelevant business to continue receiving the laughs he has been accustomed to from the more farcical character previously associated with his role. This often means that the part of Ela is totally inconsequential--and it is probably the most difficult role with which to make an impact on the audience, in any case. However, the primary problem results in the relationship between the pair not being suitably reinforced, and the pairing-off of the couples in the Act III finale being unclear to the audience.

Since plot is probably one of the most important elements in the many successes in production of Charley's Aunt, it is suitable to summarize it, very briefly, at this point. Oxford undergraduates, Jack and Charley, love Kitty and Amy--respectively!--and determine to take

¹⁶"Broadway: Reviews of Broadway Productions," Theatre Arts, March 1954, p. 18.

the step of proposing to them over a luncheon in Jack's rooms. The opportunity arises as an aunt of Charley's--from Brazil--is planning a visit that very day, and will add the necessary propriety to the occasion. An unfortunate telegram tells of her other commitments and a delay to her visit, by which time the lads are convinced the girls will not stay without a chaperone, the lady they are coming to meet. A substitute must be found at once! As luck will have it, Lord Fancourt appears in Jack's rooms to "borrow" a few bottles of champagne for his own luncheon party, and he is the very chap they need to masquerade as Charley's aunt. He even has a suitable costume, which he has planned to wear in some amateur theatricals. It transpires that Jack has made somewhat of a mistake in encouraging his new-found father from India to make a wealthy marriage with Donna Lucia, for the Donna Lucia he is introduced to is none other than their compatriot Babbs. Amy's uncle, and Kitty's guardian, Mr. Spettigue interrupts the luncheon, is grossly rude, but changes his tone when introduced to the millionairess from Brazil, for whose hand he rivals Sir Francis Chesney. The nature of Kitty's guardianship demands that she must have Spettigue's permission for marriage, which he is unlikely to give, so the girls enlist the help of "Donna Lucia". Unfortunately, Babbs must agree to marry Spettigue before the cantankerous fellow will give his permission, so Sir Francis's offer is refused--much to his relief--and the appearance of the real Donna Lucia and her "niece", Miss Delahay, reawakens an old passion in Babbs. The audience has already been made aware that Lord Fancourt and Ela Delahay have past romantic connections,

so as luck will have it, all turns out for the best. All couples, despite the complications, are united or re-united; the only loser is Spettigue, who in any case alienates audience sympathy through his selfish behaviour. Even Lord Fancourt regains the comparative fortune he deliberately lost at cards, in helping Ela's waning father.

Characters

The characters in Charley's Aunt present something of a problem for a director, and especially for actors. They are quite shallow, because the play's emphasis is on plot rather than character; their motives are those of the situations in which they find themselves rather than their own natures. The playwright, Brandon Thomas, has--in his dialogue--merely sketched his characters rather than drawn them. It is unusually informative to find that Kitty, for example, is cynical. A few externals are given as characteristics only; they are essentially caricatures rather than characters, yet for the audience to be sufficiently involved in the plot of the play, they must be interested in the people the plot concerns. What is there to work with?

Spettigue is angry, and often neglects the protocol of Victorian society--to his detriment; he appears to be pig-headed and selfish. Sir Francis Chesney is jovial and a "smart, bang up-to-date sort of chap one can talk to like a chum."¹⁷ He is remarkably youthful for his fifty-one years, ready to marry again--rather for love than expediency--and has a good sense of humour. Brassett, although Jack's

¹⁷Brandon Thomas, Charley's Aunt (New York: Samuel French, 1962), p. 41.

faithful servant, has the right sense of a servant's place, yet is able to take minor liberties in the way he gets what he wants. It is ironic that he has more respect from local creditors than his upper-class employer. As an old and faithful servant, an audience will not find it odd that he comments critically on the undergraduates of this and earlier days. Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez will be discussed shortly.

With the young people in the play, the only guide to their characters is the situation in which they find themselves. Upper-class, generally well-off financially, in love, having responsibilities to guardian or desirable "auntie", undergraduates at Oxford, and so on. Jack and Charley are virtually indistinguishable in terms of the play script--although Jack is more clever--and Kitty and Amy are apparently inseparable and display little difference, though Kitty's reference to Amy--"as Amy says, 'I shall cry'"¹⁸--probably indicates that Amy is the more emotional, if not the weaker of the two. Ela Delahay recounts her misfortunes, and we learn of her subsequent good fortune in terms of being "independent for life"¹⁹; she is obviously attractive and attracted to Babbs, devoted to Donna Lucia, and has a certain adolescent poetic vision, but apart from this we know little. Lord Fancourt Babberley is also sketchily drawn, but because of the nature of the play, he perhaps offers more opportunity as a character.

One of the director's primary concerns in casting Charley's Aunt was to find actors who could add sufficient scope to the roles to

¹⁸Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 88.

make them into real people, even though they may behave entirely unrealistically in the light of the play's extraordinary situations. An approach to characterization which involved the cut-out figures provided by the script would have been adequate, but because of the opportunity to hire suitably experienced actors and actresses, the director felt he would like to add a further dimension to the playing of the script. The first problem was to find a suitably talented comic actor to play the role of Jack Chesney. A vast role, particularly in Acts I and II, it offers very little to an actor except the opportunity of displaying his technical ability in dealing with the highly complicated stage business. There is, however, a great degree of scope for the actor playing that role to add to the little characterization provided, and to develop a well-rounded personage who contrasts nicely with Charley and Babbs. Quick-wittedness is probably the most important starting-point here, and it was hoped that the actor playing Jack would provide a characterization which substantially extended this. It was also intended to be a starting-point for the development of the characters of Charley and Babbs, although the latter has a good deal more to work with than has Charley.

Because the company was conceived and functioned as it did, this director made the decision to risk casting a much more mature set of "young ladies"²⁰ than would normally be acceptable. On the whole, the cast presented not only a mature approach to their work, but transferred this aspect to their characters as well, and this was

²⁰Ibid., p. 55.

conveyed to their audiences. Having cast an older than usual Amy and Kitty, a justification had to be found for many of the aspects of Amy's behaviour; Kitty's cynicism was more easily reconciled. As a result, it was hoped to have a rather naive and vague Amy presented against an assured and less enthusiastic Kitty.

So considerable modifications were made in terms of the characterization. To give the best indication of the director's aims, however, it is necessary to take two of the characters of the play-- Lord Fancourt Babberley and Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez--and discuss them in somewhat more detail in terms of what the script offers them, and what an actor and actress might do with their respective roles. They will also serve as an example of how sketchily the characters are generally drawn by the playwright.

Lord Fancourt Babberley is really only interesting to an audience for the role he assumes as "Charley's aunt from Brazil--where the nuts come from!"²¹, and of course this is great fun. An audience always delights in mixups concerning a character's sex, and the man in woman's clothing is a traditional source of fun, even if considered rather risqué in 1892, though certainly not so half a century earlier. Babbs' initial reluctance to assume such a role is not given a chance; typically of this play he is caught up in a situation before he has a chance to do anything about it. The pace at which the action moves helps to overcome his reluctance, and he sees the possibilities of his new role in terms of intimate acquaintance with the two young ladies,

²¹Ibid., p. 58.

much to the chagrin of his friends. This is a world--more especially an undergraduate world--in which all is fair game. Babbs can attempt to appropriate the other fellow's wine without any considerations about stealing--the others will do the same for him at any opportunity! Even in the business where he is many times almost caught out with the champagne--only Jack and Charley's preoccupation with the necessity for an aunt prevents them from noticing it--all will not be lost; if he can't get away with it, too bad. None of the young gentlemen have any real concern with minor property or debts, except where it provides a gag line, and Jack's reaction to Sir Francis's survey of his son's bills adds to this conviction. Babbs has a chance to relax a little--even though this may readily lead to further complications, and certainly adds to the fun--and to enjoy what he is doing, even to enter into it quite bombastically in the Act II garden scenes. Still, he is somewhat scared of the role, but his self-assurance, presumably natural to his class and background, is just what is needed to carry it off, even with occasional inward pangs, particularly in his relationship with Miss Delahay. Does he really love Ela? Probably so, but if it were just attraction to a pretty face and figure, it would not matter too much. Ela really loves him--in a Victorian manner with suitable reserve--and he is especially attracted to her, but the depth of the relationship is unimportant, for all the plot requires is that they are finally able to find each other by a multitude of amusing coincidences. With his other "loves", Sir Francis and Spettigue, Babbs enjoys the charade and detests the flirtation, all at the same time. His reluctance is often overruled by the unusual and entertaining insights he gains into the

nature of such flirtation.

An actor playing Babbs has an exciting and challenging role, one he must work with and develop to add greater depth and dimension to it, and one on which the style of the production rests in a great measure. Elements of slapstick, of the pantomime dame, lie within the pretence, but like this latter, for the part to be humorous the actor must remain particularly masculine; no degree of effeminacy is allowable. Even the falsetto vocal tones are to be erratic, and readily liable to lapses, and should be used primarily to establish himself with a new character he meets for the first time. The exaggeration of his reactions to the advances of Spettigue and Sir Francis must be a distinct contrast to his reactions to Ela. It is in this relationship that the actor playing Babbs has the most opportunity to build aspects of his character other than those of the ready and willing clown the audience sees in his first interchange with Jack and Charley, and the grotesqueness of his portrayal of the aunt. The part has many more chances than most to succeed with an audience and to create a well-rounded, multi-faceted character.

The real Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez turns out to be the very opposite of everything that has been mooted about her before her arrival, and in particular she is the antithesis of her impostor. She is not at all like the "awful old croc"²² Jack and Charley fear she might be. Compared with Babbs' charade, which has as a characteristic, sweetness and charm to Kitty and Amy in a highly unsophisticated, and

²²Ibid., p. 26.

occasionally obviously heterosexual manner, the real lady from Brazil is very sophisticated, and quite genuinely charming. She demonstrates her warmth in her relationship with Ela, and to a more limited extent with Sir Francis Chesney; with him she displays the teasing manner--almost coquettish--which makes her so delightful, and is a part of her sophistication. She is mildly amused, and obviously enjoys the fun offered by the charade, preferring to let it play along before her gaze than to rudely interrupt any such source of amusement.

The problem here is to avoid making the character too cynical; she will lose much of her charm should she remain cold and aloof from all aspects of the love affairs being played out before her, and it is certain this was not the playwright's intention, for she is the very one who saves the day amidst the rest of the revelations by retaining Spettigue's letter of consent and giving her blessing to the Charley-Amy and Jack-Kitty unions. An actress playing Donna Lucia needs to appear to an audience as warm, sincere, sophisticated, and with a great deal of charisma. This explains her relationship with Dom Pedro, Ela's ready acquiescence to becoming her adopted niece, and her sympathy for the general situation of the lovers, not to forget her affection for her old lost love, Sir Francis Chesney.

This director hoped, then, to encourage his actors to develop much more rounded personages than those offered by the playwright, to develop them well beyond the bounds of the characterizations available from the script. He believed it would enhance the audience's appreciation of the scrapes in which the characters find themselves, and make them even more aware of the delightful plot, for the very

reason that they would be more greatly involved with the complicated ramifications of these people.

The Nature of the Play

Playwright's Intention

Brandon Thomas, it has been noted, has given Charley's Aunt a sound and interesting, if rather far-fetched plot, revolving around the themes of love and of mistaken identity. The theme an audience will remember most is that of the young man disguised as a woman, and the hilarity this provokes when two elderly gentlemen, Sir Francis Chesney and Mr. Stephen Spettigue, attempt to win the hand in marriage of this "millionairess". However, the basic structure of the plot, and even the reason for the elaborate and farcical disguise, centers on the young lovers' complications.

The playwright is out to tell an entertainingly absurd story, and this is the play's main function. Issues of lasting importance are of little concern to the author. It is assumed that all characters except the manservant, Brassett, belong to upper-class society, and even though they may have financial troubles like the Chesney family debts, the audience is never really concerned, for the characters give the clear impression that they are very little inconvenienced by such mundane matters as money, which concerns only the common man. In any case, all will turn out for the best in the end. The exception here is Spettigue, who gets his just deserts, and who has alienated sympathy by his crass behaviour.

Brassett knows a servant's place, and unusual insights into the master-servant relationship are shown in the play. He is impervious to whatever happens, even madcap chases around the garden, and takes as his right the little appropriations he makes from his master. Jack, on the other hand, uses Brassett as a sort of pawnbroker between allowance cheques, and they appear to have an equitable relationship. Hence, the play is not at all concerned with class issues; they are simply accepted, and of no real importance.

Charley's Aunt, then, aims to tell a good, sound story, without any pretensions towards particularly believable action. Credibility is not the point; entertainment is. The plot displays lots of the unexpected and plenty of farcical action. It basically remains a piece of trivia, but a surprising and highly entertaining one.

Getting the Laughs

As the play's primary function, and the intention of the playwright, is to entertain an audience in the most amusing manner possible, a director has the special responsibility of examining all possibilities for doing this. Thus an analysis of what opportunities for humour exist in a production of Charley's Aunt is a worthwhile exercise.

The story itself, the plot and the situations in which the characters find themselves, are of course the primary basis for laughter. The "Donna Lucia" of the alternately embarrassed and amused Lord Fancourt Babberley, the old gentlemen proposing to him, the girls being ever so sweet to secure permission for their marriages, and the

customary "poverty" of the undergraduates will serve as examples. Incongruity and the unexpected are principal factors in the success of plot and situation in terms of humour.

The lines, too, are very amusing but in the light of the situations in which they are delivered. There is little attempt to tell jokes; the situation is the important factor. The "wooing" is only as funny as it is because the audience knows "Donna Lucia" is really a man; Jack says to his father, "I haven't seen half enough of you"²³ because he has obviously just been handed a very substantial cheque. There is even a running gag: "Charley's aunt from Brazil--where the nuts come from!"²⁴

Exaggeration in playing, to a suitable degree, should be encouraged from the cast. Facial expression, eye movement, broad reactions to lines and business, occasional posturing and the nature of vocal delivery, all provide fun. In business, exaggeration is often particularly important to the success of the play. Lord Fancourt's attempts to appropriate Jack's champagne must be very broad; the runs around the garden in Act II--romantic pursuits--even provide the opportunity for a figure eight move; Babbs and Spettigue have fun with a piano in Act III when Spettigue is proposing, and Babbs is arguing for the girls. These are examples of the degree of exaggeration required in parts of the play which give it its farcical nature.

²³Ibid., p. 42.

²⁴Ibid., p. 58.

The Type of Play

Charley's Aunt is most commonly referred to as a "farce", and by a definition of this style of comedy--that it relies primarily on plot and physical action for its effectiveness--this play can indeed be classified as such. This director had, however, certain reservations in stressing a farcical style to his actors in this particular production. Primarily, the reservations were based on personal experiences of productions of the play which emphasized the broader elements of farce to the virtual exclusion of the more controlled ones, and went far past the limits of farce as such, introducing the burlesque at every possible opportunity.

For farce to be successful, no matter how unpredictable and unlikely the events are, there must still remain at least some sense of reality, of a vague possibility these events just could be taking place. The actors must still be presenting characters to the audience, rather than presenting themselves spoofing their supposed characters, and getting laughs from making their actions rely on slapstick techniques, or even violence. If any of these departures occurs, the burlesque is brought in, and farce is negated, if not ruined. The director believed very strongly that if the exaggeration in playing Charley's Aunt overstepped very stringent bounds, and was even a trifle too broad in some parts of the play (such as over-reactions from Babbs in his Act III scene with Ela) the audience would lose the thread of the plot, and unevenness in production would result. Another scene in which it is very easy to burlesque the events and characters, is the Act II appearance of Donna Lucia, with its Victorian romantic phrasing which has little

relevance to today's attitudes and manners.

On the whole, the director determined to use the farcical style which he considered necessary to the successful production of the play, but he was particularly anxious to avoid moving toward burlesque, and was even prepared to add elements of a drawing-room comedy style to this production in the more relaxed scenes. The conversational interchanges are usually interesting in themselves, and there are many scenes in the play where the need for physical action is minimal. Perhaps, in today's terms, this would be considered a weakness in the structure of the farce, but Thomas's contemporary audience would not only have accepted but applauded it. The audience was, after all, of the same generation which could enthuse about the unusually static comedies of Oscar Wilde, or the melodramas of the day (like Brandon Thomas's The Colour-Sergeant) which often included emotional and lengthy conversational exchanges, amidst the relation and playing-out of fiery and complicated events.

The production style was therefore established as farce, but with the reservation that the director would where necessary move toward a high comedy style to unify the structure of the play, and restrict the natural temptation of the actor to burlesque scenes lending themselves to very broad interpretation. In this way the director believed he would be able to create an unusually sophisticated production of Charley's Aunt, and at the same time give due weight to all the scenes of the play, and smooth the areas of imbalance in the play's structure. One of the major means of achieving this in a manner acceptable to a wide cross-section of his audience, was character development as stressed earlier, which added a dimension to the

characters not evident in the mere caricatures revealed by the playwright, and did much to avoid any possibility of carrying the physical action too far.

Towards a Production Style

Sets and Costumes

Charley's Aunt is usually performed with three box sets, or perhaps two with a wing-drop set for the exterior Act II. In the light of the other productions in Repertory, a simpler form had to be established. Act I represents Jack's rooms at Oxford, Act II the exterior and a garden, and Act III the drawing-room of Spettigue's house. Obviously drapes and levels, often the simplest settings, were highly unsuitable. Yet the nature of the Repertory, the building schedule and the rotation of the productions, meant that a simpler style was needed than box settings.

Early conversations between the director and the set designer produced the idea of working all three sets within the framework of a false proscenium arch as a set piece. Proscenium was right for the period, and such a set piece would add the right note to the intended highly presentational production style, as it was intended to locate this proscenium some distance upstage of the curtain line, allowing the actors to move well downstage, outside its boundaries. The next step was to establish a see-through fragmentary style of setting as most suitable to this production, and to the Repertory's demands. Since little attempt at realism was to be made, box sets would have been far from suitable. Interest would be added by cut-out set pieces and seeing through parts of them to characters' entrances and exits. The mood of

the play is particularly light and frothy, and the airiness of such settings would enhance this. The choice of music was also made with this mood in mind.

The sets' function was to suggest the places represented with only the degree of identification and definition requisite to the plot. A working-out of ground plans and furniture placement had to be particularly careful, especially for Act I, because of the nature of the business involving furniture. In all three acts, an attempt was made to bring the play close to the audience, and to involve them as intimately as possible in such a presentational piece. So much of the action was to be downstage of the "proscenium arch", the sets were shallow, and furniture was brought as far downstage as the curtain line would allow. The false proscenium was also an attempt to narrow the stage as much as possible, as it is a particularly wide one, and the director attempted to restrict the width in terms of his blocking.

Just as the set was not intended to appear realistic in style, neither were the costumes. A period flavour was the concern of all areas. This was more suited to the breaking of the fourth wall convention than realistic period costume, hair and so on would have been. What was especially important in terms of costuming, was that the garments should not only add to the overall light mood, but help tell the story, since plot was considered to be of special importance. Discussions between director and costume designer produced a very definite attempt to colour-coordinate in order to express relationships. The pinks of Charley and Amy related to the pink and brown of the pseudo-aunt, which in turn related to the brown of the real aunt, whose

brown and gold colours also linked her to Sir Francis Chesney. It was hoped to have coloured tailcoats for the two older men, but these were impossible to tailor in the time available, and the designer had to be content with accent waistcoats beneath black tailcoats.

Final Decisions

Since the play is farcical in nature, and depends heavily on plot for its entertainment value, the director believed that a presentational style of production would be a suitable one. He kept this uppermost in his mind in determining to work with a prominent proscenium arch which was a part of, rather than a barrier to, the action, fragmentary scenery, and costumes which had a period flavour, rather than really represented the period historically.

In work with actors he emphasized that they should attempt to build upon the sketchy elements in the script, for interest in the characters and their reactions is often of prime importance in appreciating the plot of this play. On the other hand, the actors were to take the caricature elements and use these in attempting to polish their presentational posturing, and the elements of the play which are identifiable with farce, and its exaggeration.

Vocal delivery was also an important part of the acting style in this production. The director worked on obvious pronunciations such as "Lieutenant", and on particular vowel sounds such as the "a" of "can't". Also important was an attempt at crispness in rhythm and delivery. The character requiring the least work in this area was that of Lord Fancourt, who had plenty to do vocally in the use of falsetto,

and suggestions of a higher, more feminine tone through most of the play. These aspects naturally set him apart from other actors.

Keeping in mind the presentational style, the director blocked the play with the intention of bringing it well downstage towards the audience, and exaggerated posturing was used to open up the actors to both sides of the house. Charley's Aunt makes much use of the aside, and direct address to the audience, and such a style of production was intended to encourage acceptance of these devices.

The director believed that a major factor in the success of his chosen style of production would be the efficiency and slickness of the movement and business of the play. There are scenes which demand many hours of rehearsal time such as the champagne bottles of Act I, and the undressing and dressing of Babbs in Act II. An Act III example is the business with the piano. Often it was necessary to resort to "drilling" actors in their timing of moves and facial expressions in such business, and this presented one of the greatest problems of such a production. Done well, however, this type of scene, plus movement and posturing, and the right facial expressions, adds a great deal of effectiveness and professional assurance to the presentation. Such are examples of the director's suggestions for an acting style.

Summation

This director was convinced the best way of establishing a production concept would be the careful examination of all factors involved by means of a pre-production analysis such as this, but he believed from his experience that often the most efficient and equitable

manner of arriving at such a concept is not done entirely in advance. Ideally, all aspects of a thesis production should be worked out well in advance of even the rehearsal period. Set and costume designs should be approved, pre-blocking organised, acting style firmly established, and so on.

However, experience led him to believe that the problems associated with a project such as a new Repertory company, particularly problems of time, might not be such problems as they seemed. Because all could not be worked out well in advance--except the general idea--adaptability on the part of director and designers was not only much more necessary, but was automatically more readily the case. This production was not such a distinctly preplanned one as is the intention of most "thesis" productions. It was one which evolved out of problems of Repertory as well as other relationships: the script, the period of the play, the settings and costumes, the actors, and all the other people involved.

Too firm a production concept in the early stages makes for lack of adaptability, and can lead easily to pitfalls for the director. First of all, he may dogmatically pursue his intended aims in spite of modifications which may have to be made in other areas, and secondly, he loses one of his most important aids to creativity--the contributions of others. If he is totally determined his actors should do things in a pre-planned manner, he will miss many opportunities to modify and improve aspects of the style of the presentation; he may also find himself asking the impossible of an inexperienced actor, rather than adjusting to the balance of his cast to attain a unity of style. The

director might, then, well ignore the modifications necessary in sets and costumes, so that they contrast with rather than suit his production, or again, he could miss other opportunities for new and exciting ideas.

Success in directing a play, then, lies in continual adaptability, a readiness to accept change and adjust accordingly. Most often, this will be for the better, as it will lend an overall unity to the finished production, and assist in its success.

PART II

PROMPT BOOK

ACT ONE

"When pious frauds--are dispensations."--Hudibras.

CURTAIN PRESET UP. HOUSE LIGHTS FADE. WHEN THEY ARE DOWN TO HALF, MUSIC STARTS: "THE ETON BOATING SONG", HARPSICHORD RENDITION. HOUSE FADE CONTINUES TO BLACKOUT. STAGE LIGHTS COME UP.

TIME: COMMEMORATION WEEK, OXFORD UNIVERSITY, ENGLAND, 1892. MORNING.

SCENE: INTERIOR OF JACK CHESNEY'S ROOMS, ST. OLDE'S COLLEGE. SEE FIGURE 1.

AT RISE: JACK CHESNEY IS SEATED AT DESK DL, STRUGGLING TO WRITE A LETTER. HE IS YOUNG, ABOUT TWENTY-TWO, GOOD-LOOKING, AND WEARS DARK BLUE TROUSERS, BLUE SHIRT AND BOW TIE. JACK IS ALERT, SELF-CONFIDENT, QUICK-WITTED, AND WITH A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOUR. HE LOOKS AT THE LETTER, AND TEARS IT UP.

JACK

I can't! I can't get into the vein. (MUSIC FADES AT THIS POINT. JACK FLINGS DOWN HIS PEN) I don't know what to say--don't know how to begin. I wish to goodness I'd spoken to her at the dance the other evening, (RISES; CROSSES TO TABLE, C) when she told me they were all going away for the summer; instead, I've gone and left everything till the last minute, and now I'm regularly nonplussed. By George! I know what I'll do. I'll make an exercise of it. I'll write it out a dozen different ways, and send the one I think looks the best. (RETURNS TO DESK AND SITS; TAKES UP PEN) So come on, Jack, here we are, in love with the dearest girl on earth--tackle her like a man, and tell her so, or they'll be off north, you'll be gone down, and have lost your chance for ever. She's my fate, and I'm hanged if I shan't be hers. So here goes. (WRITING) "My Darling!" (STOPS) Rather strong, perhaps, to begin with. (TEARS UP PAPER, BEGINS AGAIN) "My dear Miss Verdun--" (STOPS AGAIN) No, too formal--and not a bit what I really feel. (SCREWS UP THE PAPER) "My Dear--" Hang it, why not? (WRITES BOLDLY) "My Dear Kitty!" That's grand! (BRASSETT, JACK'S MANSERVANT, ENTERS R. HE IS MIDDLE-AGED, WEARS BLACK TROUSERS, BLACK AND WHITE CHECK WAISTCOAT, AND A BOW TIE. HE CROSSES TO R OF THE TABLE, C; COUGHS. JACK DOES NOT NOTICE) Now I can go ahead like a house on fire. "My Dear Kitty, I--"

BRASSETT

I beg pardon, sir, but would you mind--?

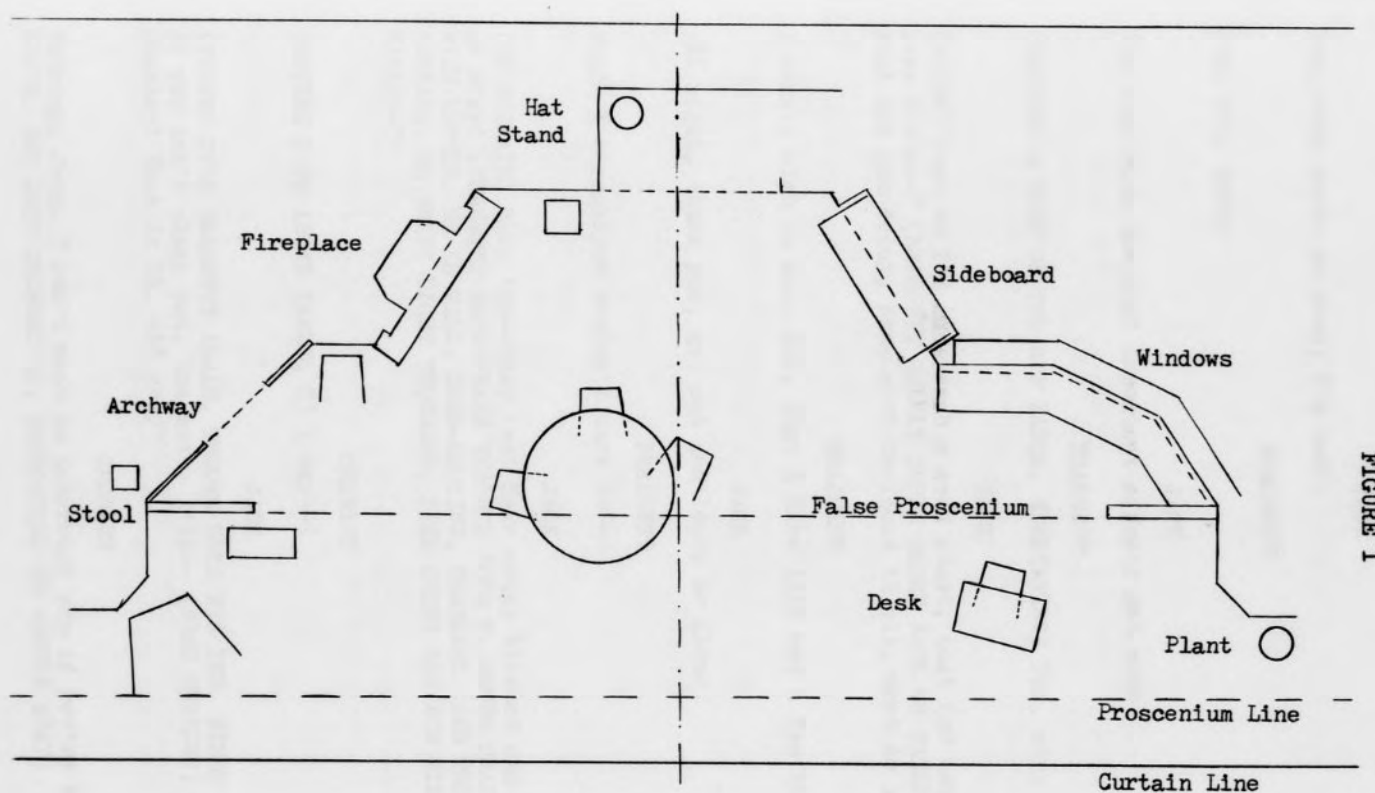


FIGURE 1

CHARLEY'S AUNT: ACT I

SCALE: $3/8" = 1'$

JACK

Yes, very much; go away, I'm busy.

BRASSETT

Yes, sir, but--

JACK

I'm busy with the most important affair; get out!

BRASSETT

(RAISING A BOOK OR TWO OFF TABLE, HESITATING) Yes, sir.

JACK

(ASIDE) Just as I'd made such a good start, too! (AT LETTER AGAIN) "My Dear Kitty--" (BRASSETT CALMLY DROPS BOOKS BACK ON TABLE, STARES FRONT) What are you doing, Brassett? Confound it all, what do you want?

BRASSETT

I merely wish to say, sir, that I have laid out a few things which--

JACK

All right, thank you, get out and leave me alone.

BRASSETT

Which I thought you wouldn't care to--

JACK

(IN DESPAIR) Take 'em--keep 'em! Take every blessed rag I've got--only go away! (BRASSETT DISAPPEARS THROUGH DOOR R. ENTER CHARLEY WYKEHAM, UC, WITH LETTER. HE IS TALL, GOOD-LOOKING, CHARMING, AND THOUGH SHY IS NOT AWKWARD. HE WEARS LIGHT TROUSERS, PINK SHIRT AND BOW TIE) "My Dear Kitty--"

CHARLEY

(MOVING D TO ABOVE TABLE, C) I say--!

JACK

(THINKS IT'S BRASSETT AGAIN, THROWS DOWN HIS PEN, RISES THREATENINGLY) If you don't clear out, Brassett, I'll-- (SEES CHARLEY) Oh, it's you, Charley! What is it, old chap?

CHARLEY

Nothing, Jack. I don't want to interrupt you if you're busy. (STARTS TO LEAVE, BUT JACK CROSSES LC, INDICATING HE SHOULD STAY)

JACK

It's all right, Charley, don't go, it's only that fool Brassett.

CHARLEY

What's he doing?

JACK

Only bagging all my old clothes because I'm going down, and worrying me like Old Harry while I'm trying to write a most important letter. (CROSSES TOWARD CHARLEY, TO CHAIR L OF TABLE) Don't mind me; I'm nervous and naggy and nonplussed.

CHARLEY

And so am I, Jack.

JACK

Why?

CHARLEY

I've been trying to write a letter, too.

JACK

A letter! To whom?

CHARLEY

To--to Miss Spettigue.

JACK

How far have you got?

CHARLEY

(CROSSING TO RC OF TABLE) Oh, I began awfully well, but--I didn't want to be too distant, and I didn't like to be too--too--

JACK

Familiar? Well?

CHARLEY

So I just said, "My Dear Amy"--and then words failed me, and I've come to you for advice. You always know what to say and do.

JACK

(GLANCING BACK AT THE DESK, DUBIOUSLY) Oh! Do I?

CHARLEY

You know my idiotic complaint; I'm shy--you're not.

JACK

Aren't I?

CHARLEY

So prescribe for me, old chap. (SITS CHAIR R OF TABLE) What am I to say?

JACK

(CROSSES D TO L OF DESK, ASIDE) A good idea! I'll prescribe for him and take the medicine myself. (CROSSES ABOVE DESK AND SITS. TO CHARLEY) Now then, let's see. You're in love with Amy Spettigue, and you want to know if there's any hope for you, and if so--

CHARLEY

You see, they're all off to Scotland tomorrow.

JACK

Yes, I know, and you want to see her at once. When and where?--bearer waits. Do I diagnose the case accurately?

CHARLEY

(STANDS; HAPPILY) To a "Tee", old chap!

JACK

Very well, then; you'll want to say something to this effect: (WRITING) "My Dear Kitty--" (CHARLEY CROSSES DL OF TABLE; STOPS HIM)

CHARLEY

No--not Kitty--Amy.

JACK

Oh, of course. What am I thinking of? (TEARS UP PAPER, TAKES FRESH SHEET, CONTINUES) "My dearest Amy--Forgive me, darling, for thus addressing you, but I love you so deeply"--underlined--

CHARLEY

(CROSSES UP A FEW STEPS; SUPRISED) Rather strong, Jack.

JACK

Shut up! "So earnestly"--also underlined--

CHARLEY

(TURNS UPSTAGE) Oh, I say!

JACK

"That I must write and tell you so. All I ask is--"

CHARLEY

(TURNS BACK; HAS A RESERVATION) But there's one obstacle to my putting it quite as straight as that, much as I'd like to.

JACK

What's that?

CHARLEY

Well--er--I've an aunt.

JACK

My dear Charley, most of us have; what about her?

CHARLEY

I feel I ought to tell her first.

JACK

Oh! (JUMPS UP; CROSSES R TO CHARLEY) If you're going to drag an aunt into the business, we may as well wait (CROSSES L TO WINDOW) till they all come back from Scotland.

CHARLEY

Why?

JACK

You know what auntie is when she steps in.

CHARLEY

No, I don't. That's just it; (CHARLEY CROSSES R AND SITS CHAIR L OF TABLE) I don't know her. I've never even seen her.

JACK

Well, we won't be too hard on that aunt; she hasn't interfered much in your affairs up to now.

CHARLEY

Except to find out that I was an orphan and have me sent to Eton, and to Oxford; and now my guardian writes to me that she's coming here this morning by an early train, and will take luncheon with me at one o'clock.

JACK

(CROSSES R TO CHARLEY) And you've never seen her?

CHARLEY

No, she went out to Brazil before I was born, and became a sort of secretary to a very rich old Brazilian chap out there, called Dom Pedro d'Alvadorez; and now--by the merest accident in the world (PRODUCES "TRUTH" FROM HIS POCKET AND POINTS TO A MARKED PARAGRAPH) I've seen this. (HANDS PAPER TO JACK)

JACK

(TAKES PAPER; CROSSING DRC, READING) "Madam--or rather Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez, the Brazilian millionaire, who has taken Lord Toppleby's magnificent mansion in Belgravia, is an English-woman of genial disposition, and a financial genius. Indeed, it was her capacity in this direction that earned the gratitude of her late husband, and led to a romantic death-bed marriage." (ADDRESSES CHARLEY) Well, I don't see much in that!

CHARLEY

Go on, Jack, read the next.

JACK

(READING) "Her only relation--is a nephew at Oxford"--lucky nephew!

CHARLEY

That's me.

JACK

(CROSSES BEHIND CHARLEY'S CHAIR TO R OF HIM) By George, Charley, this is a startler! (HANDS PAPER TO CHARLEY) And she may be here any minute.

CHARLEY

I've met all the trains up to now. I wish she'd have come some other day.

JACK

She'll arrive by the next, just in time for lunch.

CHARLEY

(DOLEFULLY) Yes, it's a bore. I wanted to write that letter to Amy.

JACK

I don't know so much about that!

CHARLEY

But it's an awfully difficult letter to write--fearfully complicated.

JACK

Why?

CHARLEY

Well, you see, I've no people or anything.

JACK

"No people," with an aunt like that! (POINTS TO PAPER IN CHARLEY'S HAND)

CHARLEY

But I've no reason to expect anything from her--more than she's already done for me--for which, of course, I'm very grateful and all that--but I want to see Amy and put it to her that if--

JACK

(SUDDENLY--COMING TO CHARLEY) Charley! I've got a clinking good idea!

CHARLEY

(STANDS; MOVES BEHIND HIS CHAIR TO JACK) Jack, you are a good chap! Write it down and I'll copy it out.

JACK

No, not for you--for me--for us both. You're gone on Amy--I'm in love with Kitty.

CHARLEY

Really, Jack?

JACK

Madly.

CHARLEY

Madly?

JACK

Madly. (CROSSES R OF TABLE) Worse than anything I ever took up--even cricket! I was writing to tell her so when you came in. (POINTING) There's the letter.

CHARLEY

(CROSSES TO JACK; SHAKES HIS HAND EFFUSIVELY) I'm so glad! and what's your idea?

JACK

Hang letter-writing! We'll give a luncheon party for your aunt, tea afterwards in the garden.

CHARLEY

In the garden?

JACK

Yes, I'll get leave.

CHARLEY

But my rooms are so small.

JACK

Never mind, I'll lend you mine. Brassett shall see to it. Brassett!
(CROSSES DL, PUSHING CHARLEY AHEAD OF HIM, TO DESK) Now, come on! First we'll ask the girls.

CHARLEY

(STANDING ABOVE DESK) Ask the girls?

JACK

(AT R OF DESK) To meet your aunt.

CHARLEY

What about old Spettigue?

JACK

Blow old Spettigue!

CHARLEY

Oh, I forgot. He's up in town for a few days on business. (SITS AT DESK)

JACK

So much the better. (CALLING) Brassett!

CHARLEY

Do you think they'll come?

JACK

They'll jump at it.

CHARLEY

What makes you think so?

JACK

Well, what do you think?

CHARLEY

Why, Jack, you know, I rather agree with you.

JACK

We'll send a note at once--you write it--go ahead. (CHARLEY WRITES TO JACK'S DICTATION) "My Dear Miss Spettigue--" (CALLS) Brassett, where are you? (BRASSETT ENTERS R, CROSSES TO ABOVE CHAIR R OF TABLE, C) Where are you? (TURNS, SEES BRASSETT) Oh--er, Brassett, get someone to take a note to Mr. Spettigue's.

BRASSETT

Yes, sir. (EXITS UC)

CHARLEY

Yes, Jack, I've got that.

JACK

"Would you and Miss Verdun--do me the honour--"

CHARLEY

(REPEATING) --"the honour"--

JACK

--"to lunch with me and Mr. Chesney:"

CHARLEY

(REPEATING) --"Mr. Chesney"--

JACK

I'll address the envelope. (TAKES ENVELOPE FROM DESK)

CHARLEY

(STILL REPEATING) "I'll address the--"

JACK

(BREAKS IN BEFORE CHARLEY CAN WRITE IT) No, not that, you muff! "At his room, St. Olde's College, to-day at one o'clock." (ADDRESSING ENVELOPE) Miss Spettigue--

CHARLEY

(ABOUT TO WRITE) Miss-- (JACK STOPS HIM BEFORE HE WRITES)

JACK

No. look out! "To meet my aunt--" What did you say her name was, Charley?

CHARLEY

Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

JACK

"Donna"--All right, stick it down. "An answer by bearer will greatly oblige."

CHARLEY

(WRITING) "Yours sincerely. Charles Wykeham. (FOLDS LETTER) Splendid, Jack, you're a genius! (HANDS LETTER TO JACK)

JACK

(TAKES LETTER, PUTS IT IN ENVELOPE, AND CLOSSES IT) It's a glorious opportunity. They're off to Scotland.

CHARLEY

And we're off "down".

JACK

And now we shall have them all to ourselves. (BRASSETT ENTERS UC)

BRASSETT

The messenger, sir.

JACK

(CROSSES UP TO BRASSETT, AND GIVES HIM THE LETTER) Give him that, and tell him to look sharp. (TURNS BACK TO CHARLEY)

BRASSETT

Yes, sir. (EXITS UC)

JACK

(RETURNS TO R OF DESK, TAKES TORN UP LETTERS, GIVES THEM TO CHARLEY, WHO PUTS THEM IN DRAWER OF DESK) This sort of thing is not to be settled by correspondence.

CHARLEY

(STANDS; AT R OF DESK CHAIR) No, and we shall have them all to ourselves.

JACK

Yes, and we couldn't have asked them if it hadn't been for your aunt. I'm beginning to love that dear old lady already. (CALLS) Brassett! (BRASSETT ENTERS UC)

BRASSETT

Yes, sir?

JACK

Lunch for five.

BRASSETT

(MOVES A FEW STEPS DS OF THE UC ENTRANCE) For how many, sir?

JACK

For five.

BRASSETT

For five, sir? (LAUGHS QUIETLY)

JACK

(CROSSES UP TO L OF BRASSETT) What are you laughing at?

BRASSETT

Well, sir, I'm afraid our credit in the kitchen is somewhat exhausted.

JACK

Oh, is it? (TURNS TO CHARLEY) How are you off for "tick", Charley?

CHARLEY

Well, Jack, I'm afraid my guardian's rather--er--

JACK

Oh, is he? (PAUSE, THEN TO BRASSETT) Never mind, Brassett, get it outside--go to Bunter's.

BRASSETT

(SHAKES HEAD DOUBTFULLY) I'm afraid, sir, we owe Bunter's--

JACK

Oh, do we? (NOTICING CHARLEY'S WATCH-CHAIN, JACK CROSSES D TO HIM) Charley, you don't mind (TAKES WATCH AND CHAIN FROM CHARLEY) it'll be all right when my cheque comes? (CROSSES UP TO BRASSETT, AND GIVES THEM TO HIM) Here you are, Brassett, do the best you can with that.

BRASSETT

(TAKES THEM AND EXAMINES THEM CRITICALLY) This is no good, sir. (HANDS WATCH BACK TO JACK) I couldn't get anything on this, sir. However, sir, I've no doubt it will be all right at Bunter's, if I say it's for me.

JACK

(LAUGHING) Oh, all right, Brassett; lunch for five at one o'clock.

BRASSETT

(LOOKS AT OWN GOLD WATCH) Rather short notice, sir. (MOVES TO TABLE, C, PICKS UP BOOKS)

JACK

All right, long pay; go where you like, do what you like, only lunch for five at one. (BRASSETT TAKES BOOKS TO SIDEBOARD, L. JACK CROSSES D TO CHARLEY, STILL WITH WATCH AND CHAIN) That's all right, Charley, isn't it?

CHARLEY

(TO JACK) I say, Jack, that's my watch!

JACK

(HANDS WATCH TO CHARLEY) I beg your pardon, old chap, (CROSSES TO L OF TABLE, C) my mistake.

BRASSETT

(AT SIDEBOARD) What wine, sir?

JACK

Champagne.

BRASSETT

(SULKILY) Very little left, sir. (OPENS SIDEBOARD)

JACK

Half a dozen bottles!

BRASSETT

(IMPERTURBABLY) No, sir, I think not; (GETTING THEM OUT FROM SIDEBOARD CUPBOARD) only four, sir. (PUTS THEM ON SIDEBOARD)

CHARLEY

Oh, quite enough.

JACK

(TO BRASSETT, AGGRESSIVELY) Six, I'll swear.

BRASSETT

Pardon me, sir--only four of champagne--and I think (TAKING OUT BOTTLE OF OPENED CLARET) yes, one of claret. (HOLDS IT UP)

JACK

Oh, hang that claret! (BRASSETT PUTS IT ON SIDEBOARD) It's been open a month. All right. (ASIDE, TO CHARLEY) He's sneaked those other two bottles. He's a corker!

CHARLEY

(CROSSES TO L OF JACK) My fellow's just the same. (BRASSETT CROSSES ABOVE THEM TO R OF TABLE. JACK GIVES FEROCIOUS GLANCE AT BRASSETT, WHO RETURNS IT IMPERTURBABLY)

JACK

(AS BRASSETT EXITS R) They all are! (CROSSES DR) Now, while you and your dear old aunt are looking at the chapel and the cloisters, Kitty and I can have our little talk.

CHARLEY

(CROSSES TO L OF JACK) Yes, Jack, that's all very well, but what about Amy and me, and our little talk? She'll be in our way horribly.

JACK

I never thought of that.

CHARLEY

She's all very well as an excuse to get the girls to come here-- (CHARLEY SITS ON CHAIR R OF TABLE) but by herself she'll be an awful bore.

JACK

She'll be worse than that. She'll be a brute of a nuisance.

CHARLEY

What shall we do?

JACK

Well, Napoleon went over the Alps on horseback, and I've been under them by train, so there must be a way out of this.

CHARLEY

But how? Couldn't we ask someone to meet her?

JACK

Yes. Someone we can depend on. (BRASSETT ENTERS R, CROSSES ABOVE THEM TO SIDEBORD, AND BUSIES HIMSELF AT IT. JACK SEES HIM, AND CROSSES TO ABOVE TABLE, C. ASIDE, TO CHARLEY) What about Brassett? He's a pompous sort of chap, and as artful as a corkscrew, can't we turn him into a Don, or something, for the day?

CHARLEY

(DUBIOUSLY) Yes, that's a good idea, Jack, but--

JACK

(AFTER ANOTHER LOOK AT BRASSETT) No, won't do--we shall want him to wait at table.

CHARLEY

Oh, of course, so we shall.

JACK

There's Freddy Peel.

CHARLEY

Oh, he's such a cynical chap. (BRASSETT EXITS R, ABOVE THEM)

JACK

Besides, he'd neglect your aunt.

CHARLEY

Yes, and want to make love to our girls.

JACK

(SUDDENLY) By George, I've got it! Babbs-- (CROSSES EXCITEDLY TO R OF CHARLEY) Fanny Babbs! We'll ask him.

CHARLEY

Oh yes; why didn't we think of him before?

JACK

He's a jolly cheerful chap. Will amuse your aunt like the deuce and keep her in a rattling good humour.

CHARLEY

Splendid.

JACK

(CALLS) Brassett! (BRASSETT ENTERS R AND COMES IN TO FACE JACK, AT RC)

BRASSETT

Yes, sir.

JACK

Go to Lord Fancourt Babberley's rooms, give him my compliments and ask him to come here at once.

BRASSETT

Yes, sir. (CROSSES TO UC ENTRANCE)

CHARLEY

(STANDS AND MOVES BEHIND HIS CHAIR) Say it's very important. (THIS STOPS BRASSETT)

BRASSETT

Yes, sir. (AGAIN HE STARTS TOWARDS EXIT UC)

JACK

(TO BRASSETT) And very immediate! (BRASSETT STOPS AGAIN)

BRASSETT

Yes, sir. (WAITS, BUT JACK CROSSES R TO FIREPLACE, AND BRASSETT EXITS UC)

JACK

And while Babbs is doing "gooseberry" with your aunt, we can have our chat with the girls.

CHARLEY

(SITS ON BACK OF CHAIR, ABOVE TABLE, C) By the by, Jack, talking of Babbs' cheerfulness, haven't you noticed something about him lately--ever since he was so ill and had to go off to the Mediterranean?

JACK

I've noticed he's been jolly hard up.

CHARLEY

I fancy, from a few hints he's dropped to me, that he's a bit hard hit himself.

JACK

(TURNS TO HIM) What, Babbs in love!

CHARLEY

Yes; and if I'm not much mistaken, he's as soft-hearted over a girl as--

JACK

We are. (CROSSING DR) All the better! he'll feel for us. He'll see the necessity then of keeping the old lady well out of the way.

BRASSETT

(ENTERS UC, CROSSES D TO ABOVE TABLE, C) His lordship's compliments, sir, and he says he can't come, he has a luncheon party, and could you lend him a few bottles of champagne?

JACK

(CROSSING BELOW TABLE TO LC, ANGRILY) Lend him a few bottles of champagne! Well, of all the cheek!

CHARLEY

Who's he got coming?

JACK

Oh, Freddy Peel, and a lot of idiots like himself, I expect, and they'll be howling comic songs all the afternoon. (BRASSETT CROSSES TO BOOK-SHELVES ABOVE CHAIR R OF FIREPLACE, AND FUSSES WITH THE ARRANGEMENT)

CHARLEY

Yes, it'll sound awfully bad, won't it?

JACK

He musn't! Here, Brassett, lay for six.

BRASSETT

Yes, sir. (MOVES TO TABLE, C, REMOVES BOOKS, AND RETURNS THEM TO THE BOOKSHELVES)

CHARLEY

(CROSSING TO R OF JACK) What shall we do?

JACK

Come on, we'll go to him, we must make him come, he can't upset all our plans in this selfish way. Put the champagne in ice, Brassett. And tidy up my room. (STARTS PUSHING CHARLEY TO UC EXIT) Come on, Charley, come on! (JACK AND CHARLEY EXIT UC)

BRASSETT

(ANNOYED) One o'clock! (LOOKS HELPLESSLY AT HIS WATCH) Put room in order first--always the way! (MOVES TO WINDOWS, L, OPENS ONE OF THEM) Hurry,

scurry, no time for anything. (CROSSES TO TABLE, C, STRAIGHTENS CLOTH) They come with a bang, they go with a bang, everything with a bang, except pay their bills with a bang. (LOOKS AT CHAMPAGNE, RUEFULLY) Well, I did think that little perquisite was safe, 'pon my word I did! (EXITS R)

LORD FANCOURT

(CALLING OFF L) Jack! I say, Jack old man. (LORD FANCOURT BABBERLEY APPEARS AT OPEN WINDOW, LC, CARRYING A LARGE GLADSTONE BAG. HE IS TALL, SLIM, OBVIOUSLY GOOD-HUMOURED, EVER-READY FOR A PRACTICAL JOKE. DRESSED IN THE SAME MANNER AS JACK AND CHARLEY, HE WEARS ORANGE TROUSERS, YELLOW SHIRT, AND BOW TIE. CLIMBING IN AT WINDOW) Where the Dickens are you? I wanted to borrow some fizz. (CROSSES TO FIREPLACE, R, OBVIOUSLY SEARCHING FOR A CACHE OF CHAMPAGNE) I wonder where they keep it. (TURNS, SEES BOTTLES ON SIDEBOARD, L, AND REACTS) Hallo! By George, the very thing! (CROSSES TO TABLE, C, PLACES BAG ON IT, AND OPENS IT. DURING THE FOLLOWING SPEECH HE MOVES BETWEEN SIDEBOARD AND TABLE, PACKING THE FOUR BOTTLES OF CHAMPAGNE IN THE GLADSTONE BAG. SELF-RIGHTEOUSLY) Serves him right, he shouldn't leave it about in this ostentatious way when I'm so beastly hard up. Won't they be jolly waxy? That's a bottle apiece (JACK AND CHARLEY, UNKNOWN TO LORD FANCOURT, MAY BE SEEN APPROACHING TO ENTER UC) and they must make do with whiskey and soda! (JACK AND CHARLEY ARE IN THE ARCHWAY UC, JACK R OF CHARLEY. LORD FANCOURT TURNS TO LEAVE, UC, SEES THEM, AND ATTEMPTS A BOLT BETWEEN THEM TOWARDS L SIDE OF ARCHWAY. THEY INTERCEPT HIM, AND DRAG HIM ON HIS HEELS TO R OF SIDEBOARD, JACK TAKING THE BAG, AND CHARLEY, LORD FANCOURT)

JACK

Hallo, Babbs. We've just been over to your rooms to find you. (PLACES BAG ON TABLE) We've been talking about you.

LORD FANCOURT

No, really? (PRETENDS PLEASANT SUPRISE) I say, how do you think I'm looking? (TAKES TWO OF THREE STEPS TOWARDS TABLE; JACK STEPS BACK TO SCRUTINIZE HIM)

JACK

(CHEERILY) Splendid, old chap!

LORD FANCOURT

Yes, I thought you'd be pleased with me. Well, (GRABS BAG) ta--ta! (TURNS TO MAKE A SIMILAR BOLT FOR THE L SIDE OF ARCHWAY UC, BUT JACK AND CHARLEY ARE READY FOR HIM. WHEN HE BOLTS, THE PREVIOUS BUSINESS IS REPEATED, ALL THREE ASSUMING THE SAME POSITIONS)

JACK

Don't go Babbs; (PLACES BAG ON TABLE) you wanted to see us, didn't you? (STEPS BACK, WATCHING LORD FANCOURT AS BEFORE)

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, yes! I wanted to borrow some fizz, but--

JACK

Sorry, I can't. I could have spared you a couple of bottles, but that fool Brassett--

LORD FANCOURT

I know. My fellow's just the same. (CROSSES TOWARDS BAG ON TABLE, JACK AND CHARLEY WATCHING CAREFULLY) There's no reasoning with them, is there? Well, ta-ta! (MAKES A FEINT TO GRAB BAG AND BOLT AS BEFORE, BUT REMAINS WHERE HE IS. THE OVER-ALERT JACK AND CHARLEY RUSH TO WHERE THEY EXPECT HIM TO BE, MISS, AND SWITCH PLACES. LORD FANCOURT GRINS AT THEM, CHARLEY CROSSES TO FIREPLACE, AND JACK COMES DOWN TO L OF LORD FANCOURT)

JACK

I looked you up last night, Babbs, but you were out.

LORD FANCOURT

Yes. You know Freddy Peel, don't you? He's an awful idiot--hasn't a particle of brains, has he? But I'm all right! He gave a card party last night, and I won a hundred pounds from him. You should have seen his face! It makes me laugh now.

JACK

Why, Freddy Peel hasn't sixpence!

LORD FANCOURT

No, really?

JACK

Did he pay you?

LORD FANCOURT

No, but he's going to--when his grandmother dies.

CHARLEY

Why, the old lady's been dead years!

LORD FANCOURT

No, really? That's beastly! You know, I'm stumped, and he's had an awful lot out of me. But he's an awful idiot, hasn't a particle of brains, has he? But I'm all right! (PICKS UP BAG) Ta-ta; I'm off! (DASHES BELOW JACK TO OPEN WINDOW, L, BUT JACK LEANS OUT AND GRABS HIS SHOULDER WITH HIS LEFT ARM, BRINGING HIM BACK. CHARLEY MOVES TO LORD FANCOURT, R OF HIM, REMOVING BAG AND PLACING IT ON TABLE)

JACK

(FORCING LORD FANCOURT TO SIT IN CHAIR L OF TABLE, C) I say, Babbs, we want you to stay and lunch with us today.

LORD FANCOURT

I say, you chaps, con't play the giddy goat! I've got to meet my tutor.

JACK

(WITH MOCK CONCERN) Babbs, you musn't work like this. You're looking quite pulled down.(KNEELS, LOOKING UP AT LORD FANCOURT)

LORD FANCOURT

(CONCERNED) Am I really? (TURNS TO CHARLEY)

CHARLEY

(ABOVE TABLE, R OF LORD FANCOURT, LEANING OVER HIM) I was only telling Jack so just now.

LORD FANCOURT

Do you think I shall die? (TURNS TO JACK)

JACK

Not you! You don't want to worry over all this study. (STANDS, L OF LORD FANCOURT) You'll be a great man of one sort or the other one of these days without all that.

LORD FANCOURT

(RELIEVED) Well, that's what I think, you know. But I ought to do something. We've had a wonderful lot of Johnnies in our family--great Johnnies in the army and navy and things!

JACK

I'll bet they never killed themselves with study!

LORD FANCOURT

(STANDING, AND MOVING BEHIND HIS CHAIR) No, but I must do something.

JACK

(MOVING IN TO L OF HIM) Of course, Babbs, you must stay to lunch. Charley's aunt is going to pay him a visit.

LORD FANCOURT

No, really? What fun! I know Charley visits his "uncle" sometimes, when he's hard up, (PULLS CHARLEY'S WATCH OUT BY THE CHAIN) so it's only right his aunt should return the visit.

JACK

(TAKING LORD FANCOURT'S ARM AND PULLING HIM TOWARDS HIM) Now that's just the sort of thing we want-- (CHARLEY PULLS LORD FANCOURT'S ARM IN THE OTHER DIRECTION, RETRIEVING HIS WATCH) a jolly smart chap like you, with a fund of humour and a lot of brilliant conversation. (PULLS LORD FANCOURT BACK TOWARDS HIM)

CHARLEY

Yes, Babbs, that's it! (CHARLEY PULLS LORD FANCOURT TO HIM, AND LORD FANCOURT TAKES HIS WATCH AGAIN)

JACK

(PULLING LORD FANCOURT BACK, AND TAKING CHARLEY'S WATCH) To interest amuse a charming lady.

LORD FANCOURT

(TAKING THE WATCH OUT OF JACK'S HAND) Yes. Who is she?

JACK

(TAKES WATCH BACK) Why, Charley's aunt.

LORD FANCOURT

(WITH WATCH AGAIN) What's she like?

CHARLEY

(PULLING LORD FANCOURT TOWARDS HIM) Well, you see, Babbs, we don't quite know. (TAKES HIS WATCH BACK) I'm going to see her today for the first time. (CHECKS WATCH BEFORE RETURNING IT TO HIS POCKET)

LORD FANCOURT

I say, Charley, she may turn out to be an awful old "croc"!

JACK

She's a widow, and a millionaire, that's enough, isn't it?

LORD FANCOURT

Rather! (TO CHARLEY) Put me down for a chance, Charley. I'll take a chance!

JACK

We didn't care to ask Freddy Peel, did we, Charley?

CHARLEY

No.

JACK

No.

LORD FANCOURT

No. He's an awful idiot!-- I say, what's her name?

CHARLEY

(DELIBERATELY) Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, dem it, what a name! (SEIZES BAG AND MAKES SAME BOLT FOR UC EXIT, BUT IS INTERCEPTED BY CHARLEY AND JACK, CHARLEY NOW ON THE R, AND DRAGGED BACK ON HIS HEELS. CHARLEY TAKES THE BAG, JACK LORD FANCOURT, AND REMAINS AT SIDEBORD. CHARLEY FLINGS THE BAG ON THE TABLE, AND LORD FANCOURT TAKES A TENTATIVE STEP OR TWO TOWARDS IT, PROTECTIVELY)

JACK

Look here, Babbs, it's no use; you must stay to lunch. You'll find Charley's aunt a charming old lady.

LORD FANCOURT

Charming old lady! I say, look here, haven't you got anything younger coming?

CHARLEY

Oh yes, two other ladies.

LORD FANCOURT

Nice? Young?

CHARLEY

Yes.

LORD FANCOURT

Ah! That's more in my line. How many did you say?

JACK

Two.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, I see. One for each of you, and the old "croc" for me. No thanks, I'm off! (GRABS BAG AND DASHES TOWARDS WINDOW LC; CHARLEY AND JACK RESTRAIN HIM, CHARLEY BY THE WAIST OF HIS TROUSERS, AND RETURN HIM TO A SEAT IN THE CHAIR L OF TABLE, C. CHARLEY IS R, JACK L, OF LORD FANCOURT)

JACK

Now listen, Babbs. This is an awfully serious affair.

LORD FANCOURT

I should think so, with an old "croc" like that!

CHARLEY

And we want your help as a friend.

JACK

Yes, Babbs, a friend we can trust, eh?

LORD FANCOURT

Rather!

JACK

We'll take you into our confidence. (CROSSING DL TO DESK) No humbug-- straight as a die. We're in love.

LORD FANCOURT

What, Charley as well? (CHARLEY CROSSES UR TO FIREPLACE) You silly ass!

JACK

No fool of a flirtation business, but the real downright serious thing.

CHARLEY

And Babbs, if you knew the girls as well as we do, you wouldn't wonder at it.

JACK

And they're coming to lunch today.

LORD FANCOURT

(STANDS) I say, have you proposed?

JACK

(SITS ON DESK) No, that's just it. (CHARLEY LEANS ON THE MANTEL)

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, I see. (CROSSES TO R OF JACK, AT DESK) You want me to propose for you?

JACK

No! We'll do that for ourselves. That's why we've asked them to come.

CHARLEY

(CROSSING TO CHAIR R OF, AND NEXT TO, FIREPLACE) You know, Babbs, you don't understand our feelings a bit.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, don't I, though. (BECKONS TO EACH OF THEM; CHARLEY AND JACK MOVE DOWN TO R AND L OF HIM RESPECTIVELY. LORD FANCOURT PUTS HIS ARMS AROUND THEIR SHOULDERS) I say— Haven't you noticed how sad I've been lately?

CHARLEY

Yes.

JACK

What is it?

LORD FANCOURT

Well, I don't know, but I think—I'm in love too.

CHARLEY

What makes you think that?

LORD FANCOURT

I'm always wanting to be alone, and hear the birds sing. (JACK AND CHARLEY LAUGH, BREAKING WAY TO THEIR RESPECTIVE SIDES OF THE STAGE) And I'm getting so fond of poetry, I can't sleep. I took to drink for a couple of days, but it made me ill for a week, so I left it off. (JACK CROSSES TO CHAIR L OF TABLE, BRINGING IT DOWN TO JUST ABOVE LORD FANCOURT, L OF HIM)

JACK

You've got all the symptoms. Sit down and tell us about it. (THRUSTS CHAIR UNDER LORD FANCOURT, WHO IS FORCED TO SIT. JACK REMAINS STANDING L OF HIM, WHILE CHARLEY CROSSES TO HIS R, ALSO REMAINING STANDING)

LORD FANCOURT

You remember when I was ploughed?

JACK

Beastly shame!

LORD FANCOURT

No, not last time--the term before. I was awfully ill, and took the yacht round to the Mediterranean, and at Monte Carlo I came across an English officer named Delahay--quite penniless and dying. You know, Jack, he tried to commit suicide.

JACK

Bad luck at the tables, eh?

LORD FANCOURT

Yes. He'd beggared himself and his only child, the sweetest little girl you ever saw. And to amuse him and keep his spirits up, I used to play cards with him.

CHARLEY

And what became of him?

LORD FANCOURT

He died, poor fellow!

JACK

And what became of her--the sweetest little girl you ever saw?

LORD FANCOURT

I lost sight of her. A lady travelling home that way--from South America, I believe--took charge of her and brought her to England. You know, Jack, I tried to tell her that--

JACK

You loved her?

LORD FANCOURT

But she was in such grief that--

JACK

It all oozed out of your fingertips and the points of your hair!

LORD FANCOURT

But, after all, you know, I might have been rejected and I should have looked a silly ass.

JACK

At any rate, you can sympathise with us. (A KNOCK IS HEARD OFF, AT UC ENTRANCE; LORD FANCOURT STANDS AND JACK REPLACES HIS CHAIR. BRASSETT HAS ENTERED R, CROSSING ABOVE THEM TO UC ARCHWAY, RETURNING WITH A NOTE) Hallo! (MOVES TO SIDEBORD AND TAKES NOTE FROM BRASSETT, WHO REMAINS THERE SORTING TUMBLERS, WHISKEY DECANTER AND JUG OF WATER ON TRAY. JACK OPENS NOTE, CROSSING D BELOW CHARLEY AND LORD FANCOURT) Here's the messenger back. (READS) They're coming! (CHARLEY AND LORD FANCOURT HAVE IMMEDIATELY CROSSED DOWN TO JACK, CHARLEY R OF HIM AND LORD FANCOURT L, READING OVER HIS SHOULDER)

LORD FANCOURT

(SNATCHES NOTE FROM JACK) By Jove! (JACK CROSSES L)

CHARLEY

(SNATCHING NOTE FROM LORD FANCOURT) So they are! (WANDERS OFF WITH NOTE TOWARDS ARMCHAIR DR)

JACK

You'll stop, Babbs?

LORD FANCOURT

Oh--I say--look here-- (LOOKS AT HIS CLOTHES)

JACK

No, you'll do as you are. We won't let you go now we've got you.

LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSING TO R OF JACK WHO IS BELOW DESK) But look here, Jack, don't play the giddy goat; I've something else to do.

JACK

What is it?

LORD FANCOURT

It's something awfully important.

JACK

Well, what?

LORD FANCOURT

I'm going to play in some amateur theatricals.

JACK

Rot! He'll be ploughed again--won't he, Charley? (CHARLEY TURNS TO THEM)

LORD FANCOURT

But I've given my word.

JACK

What are you playing?

LORD FANCOURT

A lady--an old lady--and I've never acted in my life before--

JACK

Oh, that's his tutor, eh, Charley?

LORD FANCOURT

And I'm going to try on the things before those fellows come.

JACK

You can try them on here. Where are they?

LORD FANCOURT

In my rooms, in a box on the bed, but--

JACK

(TO BRASSETT AT SIDEBBOARD) Fetch them, Brassett, quick! (BRASSETT EXITS UC)

LORD FANCOURT

No, I'll fetch them with my little bag. (GRABS BAG FROM TABLE, DASHES BELOW TABLE TO DR CORNER OF IT, IS INTERCEPTED BY CHARLEY, PRETENDS TO CHANGE DIRECTION DL. CHARLEY LUNGES FOR LORD FANCOURT, BUT MISSES AS HE HAS DASHED AROUND R OF TABLE TO UC, HEADING FOR THE EXIT. JACK HAS STARTED TO PURSUE LORD FANCOURT R, BUT HAS SEEN WHAT IS HAPPENING, AND MOVES UC, L OF TABLE INTERCEPTING HIM, TAKING THE BAG, AND CASUALLY TOSSING IT DOWN ON THE TABLE. CHARLEY HAS RECOVERED HIS BALANCE, AND HAS MOVED R OF TABLE TO R OF BABBS, UC. BABBS GROANS, AND SINKS INTO CHAIR ABOVE TABLE, CRADLING THE PRECIOUS BAG)

CHARLEY

(CROSSING L TO JACK, WHO IS POURING WHISKEY AT SIDEBBOARD) Babbs, you don't sympathise with us a bit! (TAKES WHISKEY FROM JACK, DOWNS IT IN ONE GULP, STANDS NEXT TO LORD FANCOURT, E OF HIM, HOLDING EMPTY GLASS IN HIS R HAND. JACK IS POURING TWO MORE WHISKEYS)

LORD FANCOURT

Don't I though? I only wish I could see my own little girl!

JACK

Oh, she'll turn up one of these days. (TO LORD FANCOURT) Have a drink?

LORD FANCOURT

No, I've knocked it off.

JACK

Just a small one.

LORD FANCOURT

I'm teetotal.

JACK

Oh, very well. Here you are, Charley. (CHARLEY TAKES NEW GLASS IN HIS L HAND)

LORD FANCOURT

All right, I'll have it. (BEFORE CHARLEY CAN OFFER FULL GLASS, LORD FANCOURT SNATCHES EMPTY GLASS FROM HIS R HAND, WITHOUT LOOKING AT IT. CHARLEY SHRUGS)

JACK

I tell you what we'll do. We'll drink her health--wherever she is. Here's to the future Lady Fancourt Babberley. What did you say her name was?

LORD FANCOURT

Haven't the slightest idea! (JACK AND CHARLEY LAUGH)

JACK

Go on with you! (LIFTS HIS GLASS) Miss Delahay. (JACK AND CHARLEY SWALLOW THEIR DRINKS, LORD FANCOURT ATTEMPTS TO, FINDS GLASS EMPTY, SHAKES IT UPSIDE DOWN, AND PLACES IT ON TABLE WITH A PUZZLED EXPRESSION. CHARLEY GRINS, PLACES HIS EMPTY GLASS ON TABLE. JACK REPLACES HIS GLASS ON SIDEBBOARD. BRASSETT ENTERS UC TO UR OF TABLE, CARRYING A DRESS-BOX)

BRASSETT

Your things, m'lord.

LORD FANCOURT

(STANDS, TAKES BOX FROM BRASSETT) Thank you, Brassett. You're an awfully good chap. (CROSSES BELOW CHARLEY AND JACK TO WINDOW-SEAT, L) I say, Jack, could you lend me half a crown? (TURNS AND PLACES BOX ON R-HAND END OF WINDOW-SEAT)

JACK

(FEELS IN POCKETS, THEN ASIDE TO CHARLEY) Charley! Have you half a crown?

CHARLEY

(PULLS OUT LININGS OF POCKETS) No, Jack, I haven't.

JACK

(CROSSING R, BELOW CHARLEY, TO BRASSETT) Brassett! Give me half a crown, will you?

BRASSETT

(OBVIOUSLY HAS NO TROUBLE IN COMPLYING WITH THE REQUEST) Yes, sir.
(HANDS JACK A HALF CROWN)

JACK

Babbs! (CROSSES BELOW CHARLEY TO R OF LORD FANCOURT, ASIDE) Here you are. (GIVES HIM THE HALF CROWN)

LORD FANCOURT

Thanks. (TAKES THE MONEY, AND CROSSES ONCE AGAIN TO BRASSETT, WHO HAS BEEN WAITING WITH A DEADPAN FACIAL EXPRESSION) Brasset, here you are. (GIVES HALF CROWN TO BRASSETT; JACK AND CHARLEY LAUGH. BRASSETT REMOVES BAG FROM TABLE TO HEARTH OF FIREPLACE, AND EXITS R. LORD FANCOURT MOVES TO WINDOW-SEAT AND PICKS UP BOX)

JACK

(POINTING TO BOX) What have you got there?

LORD FANCOURT

Chocolates.

CHARLEY

(DISBELIEVING) Chocolates? (SITS IN CHAIR L OF TABLE)

JACK

(MOVES TOWARDS LORD FANCOURT) Let's have a look!

LORD FANCOURT

No, I tell you what I'll do. I'll try them on after lunch while you're all in the garden.

JACK

You can't do that; we shall want you with us. Try them on now, won't take long, will it?

LORD FANCOURT

Only a minute or two. (CROSSES DRC, BELOW TABLE) I've lost an awful lot of time over these theatricals. (TURNS) But next term, I mean to work. (EXITS R, WITH BOX)

KITTY

(OFF) Oh yes, here it is, here's the name!

AMY

(OFF) Oh, so it is! "Mr. Chesney." I wonder if they're in. (A KNOCK AT THE DOOR)

JACK

Here they are, and your aunt's not come yet. (RUSHES TO FIREPLACE, AND TURNS PHOTOGRAPHS ON MANTELPIECE FACE DOWN. BRASSETT ENTERS R AND CROSSES TO UC ENTRANCE)

CHARLEY

Good gracious! (RISES, CROSSING TO MIRROR ABOVE SIDBOARD, ADJUSTING HIS TIE) What shall we do?

JACK

(DASHES ACROSS TO MIRROR, FORCING CHARLEY DOWNSTAGE, AND CHECKING HIS APPEARANCE) Oh, let them come in. We can explain. (TO BRASSETT) Show them in, Brasset. (BRASSETT DISAPPEARS MOMENTARILY THROUGH UC ARCHWAY, RE-APPEARS SHOWING IN KITTY AND AMY. BOTH ARE YOUNG AND ATTRACTIVE, KITTY DARK AND COQUETTISH, AMY RED-HAIRED AND RATHER SHY. KITTY IS DRESSED PREDOMINANTLY IN BLUE, AMY IN PINK--COLOURS WHICH REFLECT THOSE OF THEIR RESPECTIVE YOUNG MEN. THEY SWEEP TO DL OF TABLE, KEEPING CLOSE TOGETHER IN A MANNER WHICH SUGGESTS THE PROPRIETY OF THE AGE RATHER THAN ANY LACK OF ENTHUSIASM. BRASSETT EXITS R. JACK MOVES D TO L OF KITTY, WHO IS L OF AMY, WELCOMING THEM. HE TAKES EACH OF THEIR HANDS IN TURN) How do you do? (KITTY CURTSEYS) So kind of you to come! (AMY CURTSEYS)

KITTY

Oh, we were both very pleased to be able to come. (JACK TAKES HER ARM AND THEY CROSS BELOW TABLE TO ARMCHAIR DR. OVER HER SHOULDER, KITTY CONTINUES) Weren't we, Amy?

AMY

(CHARLEY CROSSES D TO L OF AMY FROM HIS POSITION AT THE WINDOW-SEAT) Oh, yes. (TO CHARLEY) Mr. Wykeham, are we too early?

CHARLEY

(TAKING AMY'S ARM, AND CROSSING DL WITH HER, TO DESK) Oh, no, no!

KITTY

(NOW SEATED) Yes, Mr. Chesney, you didn't mention any time.

JACK

Oh, not at all, not at all! We're delighted! (TO CHARLEY) She'll be here soon. (LORD FANCOURT ENTERS R, WITHOUT HIS SHIRT, AND CROSSES TO ABOVE TABLE. HE SEES AMY, THEN KITTY. CHARLEY AND JACK NOTICE HIM AND REACT; CHARLEY THREATENS HIM WITH A FIST, AND HE DISAPPEARS OFF R. THE GIRLS HAVE NOT NOTICED LORD FANCOURT. DURING THE FOLLOWING LINES, BRASSETT ENTERS, CLEARS TABLE OF GLASSES, AND RETURNS OFF R, THE WAY HE HAS COME IN)

KITTY

And this is where you think and study and do all your work and everything?

JACK

Oh yes, we do a lot of that sort of thing here.

KITTY

You've jolly quarters here. (JACK AND KITTY CONTINUE TO CHAT WITH EACH OTHER, ASIDE)

CHARLEY

(TO AMY) I'm so glad you were able to come here today. (TAKING HER TO CHAIR L OF TABLE, C) You're off to Scotland tomorrow, and we shall miss you so much.

AMY

Yes, Uncle always takes us to some dreadfully remote place at this time of the year, (CHARLEY BUMPS INTO CHAIR, AND OFFERS IT TO AMY) where we never see a soul, and it's so dreary.

CHARLEY

Why does he?

AMY

(SITS) I don't know.

CHARLEY

It's a shame!

AMY

Why, are you sorry we're going?

CHARLEY

Sorry? Why it's put me--and Jack--into a perfect fever; that's why we were so anxious to see you here today.

AMY

It's lucky Uncle is away in town, or I don't think we could have come.

CHARLEY

Why?

AMY

I don't know, but he raises such odd objections, and then you know he's so peculiar about Kitty.

CHARLEY

Why?

AMY

She's an heiress, you know, and he's her guardian. (THEY TALK ASIDE)

JACK

(ARDENTLY) Miss Verdun, have you forgotten the dance the other night? I never shall.

KITTY

No.

JACK

No! Those stolen moments in the garden by ourselves were the very happiest of all my life, and out there in the moonlight--ah, moonlight is the true atmosphere for--for sentiment.

KITTY

(STANDS) I wonder how many people have said that before?

JACK

(LET DOWN A LITTLE) Kitty, I know when you like you can be an awful plague, but today you are quite cynical.

KITTY

I know I am; I'm thinking of that man.

JACK

Of what man?

KITTY

(MOVING TWO OR THREE STEPS DR) Of my guardian--Mr. Spettigue, who hurries us away from all our best friends directly we get to know anyone really well, for fear of--

JACK

(FOLLOWS HER) For fear of what?

KITTY

(EVASIVELY) Oh, I don't know!

JACK

Why does he?

KITTY

(GLANCING AT HIM AND SMILING) Because he's a selfish, wicked old man.

JACK

Are you--really--so sorry to go away?

KITTY

(CROSSES L BELOW JACK) No, I am angry. But don't speak about it any more, or, as Amy says "I shall cry." (JACK CROSSES TO R OF KITTY)

AMY

(STANDING, TO CHARLEY) What a dear--sweet--old lady your aunt must be, Mr. Wykeham! I am longing to know her. Where is she?

CHARLEY

(CROSSES DR TOWARDS JACK, ASIDE) Jack! (JACK CROSSES TO R OF HIM) Where's my aunt? (JACK SHRUGS, THEN WHISPERS IN HIS EAR, AND MOVES BACK TO L OF KITTY. CHARLEY MOVES TOWARDS AMY) Oh, why, she's hardly arrived yet.

AMY

(SUPRISED) No, oh! (CROSSES DC, TOWARDS KITTY) Kitty, Mr. Wykeham's aunt hasn't come yet.

KITTY

(CROSSING D TO R OF AMY) Hasn't come? Oh-- (TURNS TO JACK) Then we must --we'll--run and do some shopping--and come back. Shan't be long. Goodbye! (TOGETHER, SHE AND AMY TURN AND SWEEP AROUND L OF TABLE TO UC ARCHWAY, KITTY ON THE L; THEY TURN TO FACE JACK AND CHARLEY. JACK HAS FOLLOWED THIS MOVEMENT TO L OF ARCH, CHARLEY VIA R OF TABLE TO R OF ARCH. ALL PAUSE)

AMY

(TO JACK) Goodbye.

JACK

Goodbye.

KITTY

(TO CHARLEY) Goodbye.

AMY

(RATHER SADLY) Goodbye. (KITTY AND AMY EXIT UC, KITTY FIRST)

CHARLEY

(CALLS) Goodbye.

AMY

(DASHES BACK FOR A MOMENT, WITH A SHY GIGGLE, TO CHARLEY) Goodbye.
(EXITS UC)

JACK

(CROSSES TO CHARLEY, SHAKES HANDS WITH HIM. MOVES TO CHAIR L OF TABLE, SWINGING IT AROUND SO ITS BACK IS DOWNSTAGE, SITS ASTRADDLE) See that? Off like a shot when they found your aunt wasn't here.

CHARLEY

(MOVING TO CHAIR ABOVE TABLE) Makes an awful difference, doesn't it?

JACK

Now look here, you cut off to the station and bundle the old girl here in a fly.

CHARLEY

(CROSSES UC TO ARCHWAY) The old girl! (TURNS BACK) What do you mean?

JACK

(STANDS, RETURNING CHAIR, AND CROSSES UC TO L OF CHARLEY) Well, your aunt--and I'll see after the lunch and keep an eye on Babbs.

CHARLEY

All right! (EXITS UC, THEN COMES BACK) I say, Jack, I feel happier since I've seen them, don't you?

JACK

(IMPATIENTLY) Yes; be off! (CHARLEY EXITS UC; JACK CROSSES DR, ABOVE TABLE)

LORD FANCOURT

(ENTERS R, MAKING FOR WINDOW L. HE IS DRESSED AS BEFORE, WITHOUT SHIRT. JACKS PRESENCE STOPS HIM AT RC) I say, old chap, have you got any hairpins? (BRASSETT ENTERS R, CROSSING ABOVE THEM TO SIDEBORD UL)

JACK

(CROSSES TO L OF LORD FANCOURT) Hairpins? Great Scott, no!

LORD FANCOURT

May I send your man for some?

JACK

Yes, certainly.

LORD FANCOURT

(ASIDE, TO JACK) I say, have you got sixpence?

JACK

(FEELING HURRIEDLY AND IMPATIENTLY IN POCKETS) No--afraid not.

LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSING TO DC) Why, you haven't got anything! I say, Brassett, (BRASSETT CROSSES D TO L OF LORD FANCOURT) I gave you half a crown just now; do you mind making it two shillings and getting me sixpennyworth of hairpins?

BRASSETT

(WITH A LOOK) Certainly, m'lord. (EXITS UC, L OF TABLE)

LORD FANCOURT

(CALLS AFTER HIM) You can keep the change! (TO JACK) I say, Jack, were those the girls?

JACK

(CROSSING TO R OF LORD FANCOURT) Yes. But what the deuce made you jump out like that? They might have seen you!

LORD FANCOURT

I didn't know they were here. (A KNOCK AT THE DOOR)

JACK

Look out! There's somebody else. (LORD FANCOURT EXITS HURRIEDLY R) By George! There was a lot of hope in what Kitty said, in another minute I'd have told her that I--but never mind, everything's going on splendidly. (CROSSES UR TO CHAIR R OF TABLE. ANOTHER KNOCK) Come in! (ENTER UC, COLONEL SIR FRANCIS CHESNEY, BART., LATE INDIAN SERVICE. SHORT, WITH NEATLY-TRIMMED BEARD AND MOUSTACHE, BUT VERY SMART, CHEERY AND YOUNG IN MANNER. HE WEARS BLACK TAILCOAT, BROWN TROUSERS, AND BROCADE VEST. HE HAS JUST ARRIVED FROM LONDON)

SIR FRANCIS

(DEPOSITS BOWLER HAT, WALKING-STICK AND GLOVES ON SIDEBBOARD UL) Jack!

JACK

(CROSSING U TO R OF HIM) Dad!

SIR FRANCIS

My dear boy! (THEY SHAKE HANDS)

JACK

Dear old Dad! What brings you here? Wherever have you come from?

SIR FRANCIS

From town, my lad. To have a chat with you and to bring you your cheque.

JACK

Thanks, Dad; you're a brick!

SIR FRANCIS

(CROSSING D TO CHAIR L OF TABLE) A bit over-baked, my boy; after all my years in India.

JACK

(FOLLOWS, TO L OF HIM) A bit crisped, Dad, but a humbug pictorially.

SIR FRANCIS

Am I? How do you make that out?

JACK

How old are you?

SIR FRANCIS

What do you say to fifty--

JACK

Fifty?

SIR FRANCIS

One! (SEE FIGURE 2)

JACK

Who'd believe it?

FIGURE 2



SIR FRANCIS

And you, Jack, seem much older than I was at your age-- I suppose it's the times--even the old College shows it; (HE HAS CROSSED L TO WINDOW) new ivy, new paint.

JACK

Alma mater's an old beauty still, dad.

SIR FRANCIS

I suppose she is, (TURNING BACK FROM WINDOW) by aid of the gentle artifices of the toilet. (GUFFAWS, THEN CROSSES DL TO DESK, SITTING ON ITS CORNER) Well, we all grow old. (TAKES OUT WALLET CONTAINING CHEQUE ALREADY MADE OUT TO JACK)

JACK

(CROSSING D TO R OF SIR FRANCIS) And as presentably as possible. Why, dear old Dad, even you at fifty--

SIR FRANCIS

One!

JACK

Fifty years ago would have been a stout, white-haired--or bald--top-booted, domineering old boy! And instead, here you are, a smart, bang up-to-date sort of chap one can talk to like a chum! Now how have you done it?

SIR FRANCIS

Don't know.

JACK

Do you drink?

SIR FRANCIS

All I want.

JACK

Eat well?

SIR FRANCIS

Never noticed.

JACK

There you are! Consequently health good, temper perfect--we're going to be great pals, Dad.

SIR FRANCIS

(HANDS JACK HIS CHEQUE) Here you are, my boy. There's your cheque to go on with. (EXAMINES A PILE OF BILLS ON JACK'S DESK)

JACK

Thanks, Dad! (CROSSES TO L OF TABLE, SEES AMOUNT OF CHEQUE, AND DOES A TAKE) I haven't seen half enough of you! (GRINS)

SIR FRANCIS

(HOLDING UP BILLS) I see your hospitality--

JACK

I hope, Dad--

SIR FRANCIS

Never mind; same when I was a lad.

JACK

(POINTS AT OBVIOUS BILL) I've been done over that wine monstrously.

SIR FRANCIS

Were you? Never mind, so was I. (THEY LAUGH. SIR FRANCIS CROSSES TO JACK, L OF HIM) Done over everything monstrously at college, but settle up, settle up-- (CROSSING DR, BELOW TABLE) I'm very satisfied with you. It's something to go down from college with a record like yours. (AT SMALL TABLE, DR. PICKS UP CIGAR BOX FROM TABLE, AND OPENS IT) I say, my boy, where the deuce did you get these cigars?

JACK

(CASUALLY) Those, Dad?

SIR FRANCIS

Ah! (TAKES A CIGAR, AND PUTS BOX BACK ON SMALL TABLE) That accounts for the bills. (POCKETS THE CIGAR, MOVING TO ARMCHAIR DR) And now, (SITS) my lad, we must begin to think.

JACK

(STEPPING TOWARDS SIR FRANCIS, BELOW TABLE, C) Think?

SIR FRANCIS

Now that I have come into the family title, as you know, I have also-- which you don't know--come into the family debts and difficulties.

JACK

(SITS CHAIR R OF TABLE, C) Debts!

SIR FRANCIS

Which are far more than I expected, with the result that all the money I've been saving for you in India goes to pay them. And in short, Jack, you and I, for the next few years— will be, comparatively speaking, poor men.

JACK

Poor men! (JACK STANDS, ASIDE) This settles me with old Spettigue!

SIR FRANCIS

(RISING) However, I'm in hopes of a small appointment for you— (JACK TURNS HOPEFULLY, AND TAKES A STEP TOWARD SIR FRANCIS) --in Bengal. (JACK MOVES TO DOWNSTAGE END OF FIREPLACE)

JACK

Bengal! What a horrible place! (TURNS, SEES BRASSETT WHO HAS ENTERED UC, HOLDING UP A RATHER DELICATE-LOOKING BROWN PAPER PACKET) What is it, Brassett?

BRASSETT

(ASIDE, TO JACK) His lordship's hairpins, sir.

JACK

Confound his hairpins! (JACK MOVES DOWNSTAGE TOWARDS TABLE, C, AND BRASSETT CROSSES ABOVE HIM TO EXIT R. ASIDE, RECOLLECTING) By George! The dad'll be an odd one. I must get rid of Babbs somehow if the dad stays. (SUDDENLY) Stays! Why not? (ALOUD) Dad, (CROSSES A FEW STEPS TOWARDS SIR FRANCIS) I've an idea. (SIR FRANCIS STEPS TOWARDS JACK) Couldn't this matter be settled by a wealthy marriage?

SIR FRANCIS

(TURNS AWAY) No; that's the sort of thing I rather deprecate. I don't think, Jack, I'd--

JACK

Listen. My chum—that is Charley Wykeham's aunt, Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez, (JACK CROSSES DOWN TOWARDS SIR FRANCIS) is coming here to lunch today. She's a widow—

SIR FRANCIS

(DUBIOUSLY) A widow?

JACK

And a millionaire.

SIR FRANCIS

(MORE HOPEFULLY) And a millionaire?

JACK

And a charming woman.

SIR FRANCIS

No, Jack, I don't think I'd advise you to do a thing of this kind merely for the sake of money.

JACK

No, not me, Dad--you.

SIR FRANCIS

Me! You young rascal! (PLAYFULLY ATTEMPTS TO PUNCH JACK, QUEENSBURY STRAIGHT-ARMED STYLE. THEY SPAR, SIR FRANCIS SKIPPING TO DL NEAR DESK)
No, no! I shall never marry again.

JACK

Don't be rash, Dad. Think it over. Where are your things?

SIR FRANCIS

At the hotel.

JACK

Go and change. Make yourself as nice as possible, come back to lunch at one o'clock; and Dad, put a flower in your buttonhole--

CHARLEY

(RUSHING IN, UC, WAVING TELEGRAM) I say, Jack! (STOPS ABRUPTLY, HAVING ALMOST RUN INTO SIR FRANCIS WHO HAS MOVED UPSTAGE IN PREPARATION FOR LEAVING)

JACK

(SWEEPS ABOVE TABLE TO BETWEEN CHARLEY, UC ABOVE TABLE, AND SIR FRANCIS, UL NEAR SIDEBORD) Oh, Dad, Charley Wykeham. Charley, my father.

SIR FRANCIS

(CROSSES BELOW JACK TO CHARLEY, AND SHAKES HIS HAND) Glad to know you, my boy, glad to know you.

JACK

(TO SIR FRANCIS, ASIDE) Her nephew--nice boy, you'll like him.

SIR FRANCIS

I thought it was the fire brigade! (GUFFAWS, MOVING TO SIDEBOARD FOR HIS THINGS. CHARLEY LOOKS EMBARRASSED, MOVES TO FIREPLACE)

JACK

Now, don't forget. Put a flower in your buttonhole, takes years off a man, a flower in his buttonhole.

SIR FRANCIS

(TAKES HAT, STICK AND GLOVES FROM SIDEBOARD) No, Jack, you come and lunch with me at the Mitre. (MOVES TO UC ARCHWAY)

JACK

Now, don't be rash, Dad! See her first, see her first!

SIR FRANCIS

(PUTTING ON HIS HAT JAUNTILY) All right, Jack. I'll have a look at her. (SMILING) I'll have a look at her. (EXITS UC)

JACK

(CROSSING DL, IMPATIENTLY) Well, what is it?

CHARLEY

(FOLLOWS HIM, ABOVE TABLE, TO R OF HIM) Read that. (HANDS HIM THE TELEGRAM)

JACK

(READS) "Important business, don't expect me for a few days. Lucia d'Alvadorez." (EXCITEDLY) No!!!

CHARLEY

(NERVOUSLY) She's not coming!

JACK

(CROSSES R OF CHARLEY) But she must! (TURNS TO HIM) Go—wire—telegraph—

CHARLEY

No use. There's no time.

JACK

(CROSSES DC) But hang it! The girls won't remain without a chaperone. What are we to do?

CHARLEY

(CROSSES L TO WINDOW, GLANCES OUT) Couldn't we ask the Proctor's wife, old Mrs.--?

JACK

(GLOOMILY) Who'd sit and stare like an owl.

CHARLEY

(TURNING FROM WINDOW) Here they are! They're coming! (LOOKS OUT WINDOW AGAIN)

JACK

What on earth are we to do?

LORD FANCOURT

(OFF, R) I say, Jack, come and look at me! (JACK CROSSES TO DOOR R)

JACK

What the deuce is it? (LOOKS IN, DOES TAKE BACKWARD) By George! Splendid! (TO CHARLEY) Charley, come here quickly! (CHARLEY CROSSES TO L OF JACK, ABOVE TABLE) Do you know what a pious fraud is?

CHARLEY

(SURPRISED AND PUZZLED) Pious fraud?

JACK

First cousin to a miracle! Look! (PUSHES CHARLEY R TO LOOK THROUGH DOORWAY)

CHARLEY

(LOOKING) What is it?

JACK

Babbs--your aunt!

CHARLEY

(DOES BACKWARD TAKE) Babbs! (WIDE-EYED WITH ANOTHER TAKE, FACING DOWN-STAGE) My aunt!

JACK

It's the only one you've got, so you'll have to make the best of her. (JACK PUSHES CHARLEY DR)

LORD FANCOURT

(OFF, R) I say--look here-- (LORD FANCOURT ENTERS, ABOVE JACK AND CHARLEY, TO R OF TABLE. HE IS DRESSED AS AN OLD LADY, WITH LONG BROWN DRESS, BROWN HAT TIED UNDER HIS NECK, AND PINK FICHU OVER HIS SHOULDERS. HE FLOUNCES AND TURNS) How's this? (A SIMILAR MOVE DC)

JACK

(REACTS WITH LAUGHTER, AS DOES CHARLEY, THEN MOVES A STEP OR TWO TOWARDS LORD FANCOURT, EXAMINING HIM) Splendid! (A KNOCK AT THE DOOR)

LORD FANCOURT

(FRIGHTENED) Who's that? (CROSSES TOWARDS DOOR R, OFFERING TO BOLT)

JACK

(STOPPING HIM BEFORE HE CAN REACH THE DOOR) The girls!

LORD FANCOURT

The girls?

JACK

Charley's aunt can't come.

LORD FANCOURT

Can't she? I'll go and take these things off. (JACK RESTRAINS HIM)

JACK

No, they won't stop if you do.

LORD FANCOURT

Won't stop! What do you mean?

JACK

You must be Charley's aunt!

LORD FANCOURT

(IN DISMAY) Me? No!!! (JACK GRABS LORD FANCOURT'S WAIST, CHARLEY HIS SHOULDERS, AND THEY SPIN HIM AROUND IN A COMPLETE TURN. JACK NOW TAKES HIS FEET, AND THEY STAND HIM IN FRONT OF THE ARMCHAIR DR. BOTH JACK AND CHARLEY ARE L OF LORD FANCOURT, CHARLEY SLIGHTLY UPSTAGE. THEY PUSH HIM INTO THE CHAIR. LORD FANCOURT TRIES TO STAND, BUT IS RESTRAINED BY CHARLEY WHO APPEARS TO KICK HIM--HE REALLY KICKS THE CHAIR--AND LORD FANCOURT WRITHES. JACK CROSSES TO RC)

JACK

(TO BRASSETT, WHO HAS ENTERED R IN RESPONSE TO THE KNOCK) Show them in, Brasset. (JACK CROSSES UL TO SIDEBORD, AND BRASSETT MOVES UC TO ARCHWAY. HE SHOWS THE GIRLS IN, UC. KITTY, AND AMY, R OF HER, SWEEP DC TOGETHER. CHARLEY HAS HIS R HAND ON HIS HIP, AND LORD FANCOURT PULLS THE ELBOW OUT, STICKING HIS HEAD THROUGH CHARLEY'S ARM TO GET A CLOSER LOOK AT THE GIRLS. CHARLEY CLOUTS LORD FANCOURT, WHO WRITHES. JACK CROSSES D TO L OF THE GIRLS) Ah! You've got back. So glad! (BRASSETT EXITS R)

KITTY

Yes; we've been longer than we intended, but (CROSSING TO L OF JACK) Amy wanted to get some flowers for Charley's aunt. Has she come?

AMY

(MOVING IN TO R OF JACK) Yes. Has she? I hope she's come?

JACK

Oh, yes. (CROSSES RC) She's come. (AMY AND KITTY FOLLOW JACK, TOGETHER, STOPPING AT DR CORNER OF TABLE, C. CHARLEY CROSSES DR, REVEALING LORD FANCOURT, WHOM JACK INTRODUCES) Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez, Miss Spettigue, Miss Verdun. (THE GIRLS CURTSEY) Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez, Charley's aunt. (CHARLEY MOVES IN CLOSE TO LORD FANCOURT, R OF HIS CHAIR) Go on, (ASIDE TO LORD FANCOURT) say something! (SEE FIGURE 3)

LORD FANCOURT

(STARES AT THEM BLANKLY, AND AFTER A PAUSE, FALSETTO) How do you do, my dears?

KITTY

(CROSSES A FEW STEPS TOWARDS LORD FANCOURT, WHO HALF HIDES HIS FACE WITH A FAN HE CARRIES) We called on you before, Donna Lucia, but you hadn't arrived.

AMY

(CROSSING BELOW KITTY TO L OF LORD FANCOURT, GIVING FLOWERS) And we've brought you these. (AMY STEPS BACK TO R OF KITTY)

LORD FANCOURT

(TAKING FLOWERS) Oh, thank you!

KITTY

I hope your journey from town hasn't tired you.

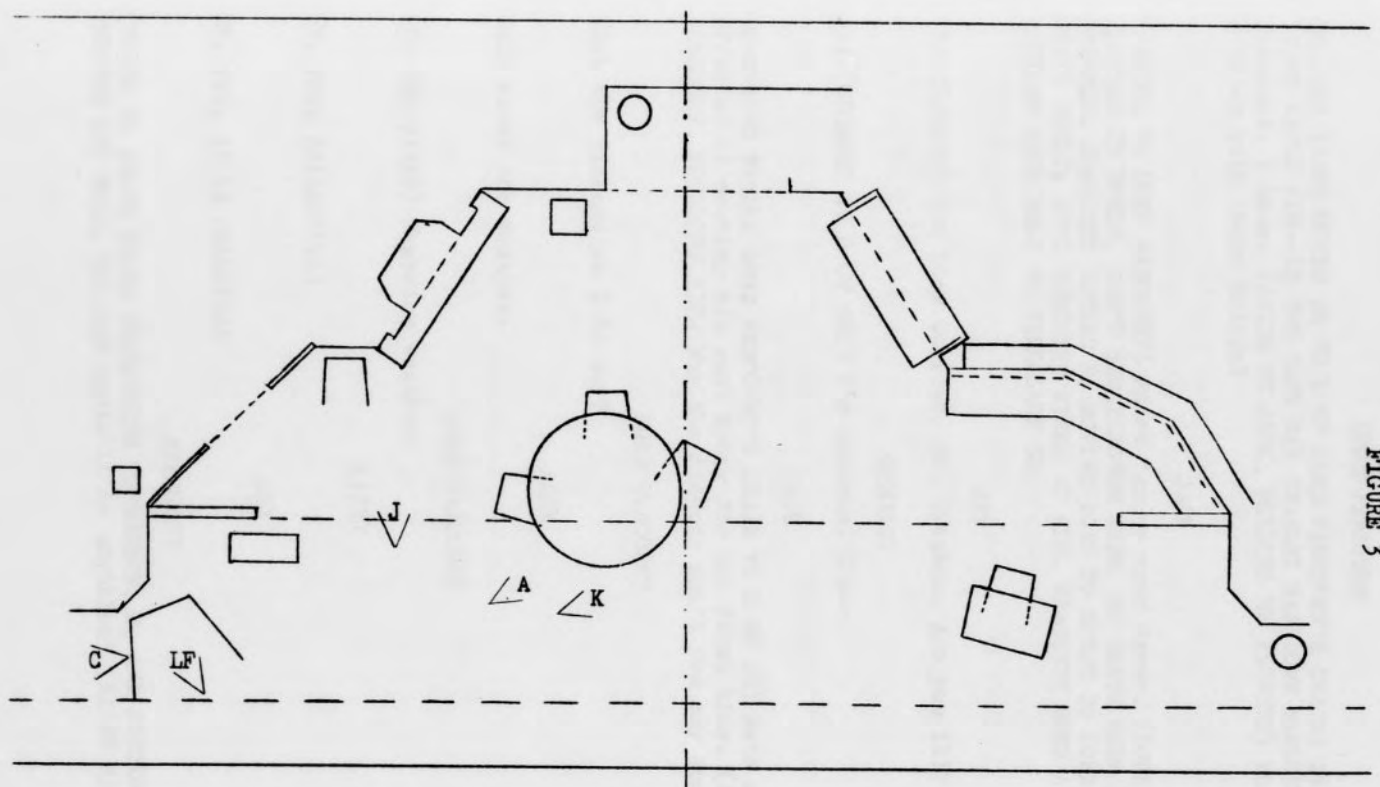


FIGURE 3

CHARLEY'S AUNT: ACT I

SCALE: $\frac{3}{8}" = 1'$

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, no! (JACK MOVES IN TO L OF LORD FANCOURT'S CHAIR) It was very jolly. (JACK KICKS HIM--IN THE SAME WAY CHARLEY HAS DONE EARLIER--AND SMILES) Pleasant, I mean. (ASIDE TO JACK, HOLDING UP FLOWERS) What the deuce am I to do with these things?

JACK

(ASIDE, TO LORD FANCOURT) Stick 'em up your dress. (LORD FANCOURT PUTS FLOWERS IN DRESS, CAN'T SEE THROUGH THEM, SO PARTS THEM AND PEERS BETWEEN. BRASSETT ENTERS R, MOVING DOWN TO SPEAK TO LORD FANCOURT, CAN'T SPEAK; LORD FANCOURT WINKS AT HIM. BRASSETT DOES A TAKE, AND RETIRES HURRIEDLY TO FIREPLACE UR)

AMY

(TO CHARLEY) You look worried, Mr. Wykeham. Are you ill?

CHARLEY

No; (CROSSES TO R OF AMY) I'm anxious, I'm--

JACK

(CROSSING BEHIND LORD FANCOURT'S CHAIR TO R OF IT) He's a little affected at meeting his aunt today for the first time. (ASIDE TO LORD FANCOURT, PRODDING HIM) Why the dickens don't you say something?

LORD FANCOURT

What the dickens am I to say?

JACK

Talk about the weather.

LORD FANCOURT

(TO THE GIRLS) Charming weather.

KITTY

Oh, yes, delightful!

AMY

Oh, yes, it is charming!

BRASSETT

(MOVES TO ABOVE FALSE PROSCENIUM TORMENTOR, R, AND STICKS HIS HEAD THROUGH IT) Well, College gents'll do anything! (EXITS R)

LORD FANCOURT

(ASIDE TO JACK) You know, you're placing me in a terribly false position.

AMY

(CROSSING D TO L OF LORD FANCOURT) May I arrange these for you, Donna Lucia? (LORD FANCOURT HANDS FLOWERS TO HER) After all, you know, we have some nice weather sometimes in poor old England. (AMY CROSSES TO ABOVE TABLE, C. JACK MOVES TO KITTY, AND SEATS HER IN CHAIR R OF TABLE, STANDING R OF HER)

LORD FANCOURT

(ASIDE TO JACK) What on earth does she mean by that?

JACK

Why, you're a foreigner.

LORD FANCOURT

(AS CHARLEY CROSSES TO L OF HIS CHAIR, WATCHING HIM CLOSELY) A foreigner! What did you say my name was?

JACK

Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

LORD FANCOURT

What am I? Irish?

CHARLEY

No, English. Married a Portuguese abroad.

JACK

A widow.

CHARLEY

From Brazil.

JACK

And a millionaire.

LORD FANCOURT

I say, Charley, have I any children?

CHARLEY

No, you fool! (CHARLEY KICKS HIS CHAIR AS BEFORE, AND LORD FANCOURT REACTS. BRASSETT ENTERS R WITH TRAY OF LUNCHEON THINGS, AND MOVES ABOVE TABLE, C. DURING THE FOLLOWING SCENE, HE SETS THE TABLE WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF AMY AND KITTY. HE ALSO MOVES CHAIRS ABOVE AND L OF THE TABLE CLOSER TOGETHER, IN PREPARATION FOR THE LATER SEATING ARRANGEMENTS. THE TABLE IS SET FOR SIX)

LORD FANCOURT

Well, one ought to know. That's all right. Now I can go ahead. (TO THE GIRLS) Yes, it is wonderful weather, for England. (THE GIRLS AGREE, AD LIB, BUT A LITTLE PUZZLED. LORD FANCOURT RISES, ASIDE TO JACK) Shall I take them to see the chapel and the cloisters? (CHARLEY PUSHES HIM BACK IN THE CHAIR)

JACK

(MOVING TO R OF LORD FANCOURT) No; you leave that to me and Charley; we'll attend to them.

KITTY

Of course, Oxford is all very new to you, Donna Lucia, but it's a dear old place in any weather. Amy and I will show you all about.

LORD FANCOURT

I shall be delighted. (RISES, BUT CHARLEY AND JACK PUSH HIM BACK INTO THE CHAIR)

KITTY

You're staying till tomorrow, are you not?

LORD FANCOURT

(ASIDE TO JACK) Am I staying until tomorrow?

JACK

(QUICKLY AND RATHER LOUDLY) No.

LORD FANCOURT

(QUICKLY AND VERY LOUDLY) No. (THE GIRLS TURN IN SUPRISE)

KITTY

Oh.

AMY

(CROSSES TO R OF KITTY) Oh, but you will, you must! (TO KITTY) Musn't she, Kitty? (KITTY RISES, ACKNOWLEDGING AGREEMENT)

CHARLEY

(ANXIOUSLY) I'm afraid auntie can't stay after today.

LORD FANCOURT

No; you see, it's my washing day.

CHARLEY

(TO GIRLS, EXPLAINING) She has so much business to attend to--in town.

JACK

Yes, lawyers, stocks--

LORD FANCOURT

Yes, stocks and socks-- (PULLS DRESS UP, REVEALING SHOE AND SOCK TO THE AUDIENCE. JACK KICKS CHAIR, AND LORD FANCOURT REACTS) --all very important, you know.

AMY

Oh, I'm so sorry, we have so longed to know you.

LORD FANCOURT

Have you, my dear?

AMY

(CROSSES TO L OF LORD FANCOURT'S CHAIR, KNEELS) Mr. Wykeham has told us so much about you, that he has made us quite love you.

LORD FANCOURT

(SEIZING HIS OPPORTUNITY, AND FONDLING AMY) Has he, my dear? (CHARLEY TAKES LORD FANCOURT'S ARM AWAY ANGRILY, BUT HE REPLACES IT, AND CHARLEY REMOVES IT AGAIN. LORD FANCOURT GIVES AMY A QUICK LITTLE HUG, AND BOTH THE BOYS A LOOK OF TRIUMPH. THEY SULK)

AMY

And he's so grateful; he says he owes everything to you and never could repay you, and oh, he is such a good frank, upright man-- it was noble of you!

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, yes, of course, my dear. It was only my duty to see after the welfare of my poor brother's--

JACK

(ASIDE TO LORD FANCOURT, QUICKLY) Sister's, you fool!

LORD FANCOURT

(TO AMY, REPEATING) Sister's you fool-- (CORRECTING HIMSELF) sister's (WITH AGGRESSIVE LOOK AT JACK) and (TO AMY) brother-in-law's orphan girl.

JACK

(ASIDE, AS BEFORE) Boy! Boy!

LORD FANCOURT

(TO AMY) Boy--boy! (ASIDE TO AUDIENCE) I'll say twins in a minute. (BRASSETT HAS FINISHED WITH THE LUNCHEON TABLE, AND EXITS R)

AMY

Yes, but it was so good of you to find out; you were so far away in a foreign land, and he might have been left to starve, or to fall into cruel hands. But you have a good, kind, affectionate nature--

LORD FANCOURT

Have I, my dear?

AMY

Anyone can see it in your face.

LORD FANCOURT

No!

AMY

I feel I could tell my whole heart to you. (LOOKS AWAY TO CHARLEY)

JACK

(ASIDE, TO LORD FANCOURT) Don't let her.

LORD FANCOURT

(ASIDE, TO JACK) I'm not going to. The dear little thing!

AMY

(TO LORD FANCOURT) You don't mind my talking to you like this, do you?

LORD FANCOURT

My dear, you are a very charming little girl, of whom I am sure I could soon grow very fond-- (CHARLEY SHAKES FIST AT LORD FANCOURT) And you must tell me all that you like, some day, when you know me better. (AMY AGAIN LOOKS AWAY TO CHARLEY. ASIDE, TO JACK) How the devil is that?

AMY

Oh, I feel I've known you years and years already. (KISSES LORD FANCOURT ON THE CHEEK, AND MOVES TOWARDS KITTY, AT R OF TABLE. JACK CROSSES BETWEEN THEM, AND CHARLEY PUNCHES LORD FANCOURT. THEN CHARLEY CROSSES TO R OF AMY)

LORD FANCOURT

(ASIDE) They're jealous! I'm very sorry, (GLEEFULLY) but it was very nice.

BRASSETT

(ENTERS R, HURRIEDLY. TO JACK, ANXIOUSLY) Mr. Chesney! Mr. Chesney! I beg pardon, sir, but I heard Mr. Spettigue enquiring for your rooms, sir. (GENERAL CONSTERNATION FROM ALL, AD LIB. AMY CROSSES TO UC OF SET, ABOVE TABLE; KITTY CROSSES L; BRASSETT EXITS R. JACK AND CHARLEY STARE AT EACH OTHER, AGHAST)

JACK

Mr. Spettigue back! I thought he was in London.

KITTY

(CROSSES R TO JACK) Mr. Chesney, I beg of you to send him away. (A KNOCK IS HEARD. JACK USHERS KITTY AND AMY OUT R. LORD FANCOURT LOOKS SCARED AT KNOCK, AND BOLTS ABOVE TABLE TO WINDOW, L. CHARLEY BOLTS AFTER HIM, PULLS HIM BACK FROM WINDOW, AND FORCES HIM INTO CHAIR AT L OF TABLE)

LORD FANCOURT

(IN TERROR, GRABBING CHARLEY) What am I to say? What am I to do?

CHARLEY

Stay where you are, Babbs. Tell him what you like, only get rid of him. (CHARLEY EXITS R, QUICKLY. A KNOCK AGAIN, MORE IMPATIENTLY)

SPETTIGUE

(OFF; IN A LOUD AND ANGRY VOICE) Why doesn't somebody answer this door? STEPHEN SPETTIGUE ENTERS UC. HE IS A WELL-TO-DO SOLICITOR OF ABOUT FIFTY-FIVE. WHEN NOT IN A TEMPER, HE CAN BE REASONABLY CHARMING, BUT MOST OF THE TIME HE IS POMPOUS, SELF-OPINIONATED, ASSERTIVE, AND NOT OPEN TO ARGUMENT. GREY-HAIRED, HE IS DRESSED IN BLACK TAILCOAT, GREY TROUSERS, MAROON VEST, AND GREY TOP-HAT. HE BURSTS INTO THE ROOM, HAT ON, AND CONFRONTS LORD FANCOURT FROM LC. FURIOUSLY) Why doesn't somebody answer this door?

LORD FANCOURT

(RISING, FIXING HIM AGGRESSIVELY--HE TOWERS OVER SPETTIGUE--AND BACKING HIM ACROSS L TO DESK. SPETTIGUE BUMPS INTO DESK, AND LORD FANCOURT TURNS AWAY) What do you want?

SPETTIGUE

I wish to see Mr. Chesney.

LORD FANCOURT

(POINTING WITH CLOSED FAN) Where did you get that hat? (AGGRESSIVELY) Take it off, sir! (SPETTIGUE REMOVES THE HAT, AND IS ABOUT TO SIT IN THE CHAIR AT DESK) Don't sit down, sir! (SPETTIGUE STRAIGHTENS HURRIEDLY) I'm not sitting down. I didn't ask you to sit down.

SPETTIGUE

We'll waive that for the present, madam. I wish to see Mr. Chesney at once.

LORD FANCOURT

We'll you can't see him; he's not present. I am the only person present.

SPETTIGUE

But the porter told me that two young ladies--my niece and my ward--were here.

LORD FANCOURT

I tell you I am the only young lady present.

SPETTIGUE

But he told me he saw them come in. (TAPS TOP OF HIS HAT)

LORD FANCOURT

And didn't he tell you he saw them go out? (TAPS TOP OF SPETTIGUE'S HAT TWICE WITH LAST TWO WORDS, WITH FAN)

SPETTIGUE

(LOUDLY) No!

LORD FANCOURT

(JUST AS LOUDLY) Very well, then, what more do you want?

SPETTIGUE

(CROSSES UP TO WINDOW, L) They've gone into the garden.

LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSING TO L OF TABLE, C) They've done nothing of the kind.

SPETTIGUE

(CROSSING A FEW STEPS TOWARDS DOORWAY, UC) Then they've gone into the town.

LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSING UP TO L OF SPETTIGUE) Well, why couldn't you think of that before? And, now sir, having got all the information you are likely to get, in your present condition-- (EYEING HIM ALL OVER)

SPETTIGUE

Madam!

LORD FANCOURT

Disgraceful! Where have you been?

SPETTIGUE

What do you mean, madam? (LORD FANCOURT CROSSES DL TO DESK, AND SITS IN CHAIR ABOVE IT) I am annoyed, but perfectly sober.

LORD FANCOURT

Well, you don't look it. Other people can be annoyed as well as yourself. (PICKS UP TIMETABLE FROM DESK)

SPETTIGUE

Madam, I apologise. Good morning. (PUTS HAT ON; CROSSES FURTHER UC. AS HE TURNS TO GO, LORD FANCOURT HALF RISES, THROWS TIMETABLE, KNOCKS SPETTIGUE'S HAT OFF, AND SITS AGAIN, ASSUMING AN UNCONSCIOUS AIR. SPETTIGUE RETRIEVES HAT, AND CROSSES DL, ABOVE LORD FANCOURT, HOLDING OUT THE HAT) Did you see anything strike that hat?

LORD FANCOURT

I beg your pardon?

SPETTIGUE

(PUTTING HAT CLOSER TO LORD FANCOURT) Did you see anything strike that hat?

LORD FANCOURT

(ASIDE) He wants me to do it again. (STRIKES HAT WITH HIS FAN. SPETTIGUE CROSSES UC, AND EXITS, PUTTING HIS HAT ON, ANGRILY. LORD FANCOURT CROSSES TO DR CORNER OF TABLE, C) Oh, my dears!

KITTY

(ENTERS R, WITH AMY, AND THEY CROSS TO R AND L OF LORD FANCOURT, RESPECTIVELY. JACK AND CHARLEY FOLLOW, TO DRC. WHEN ALL ARE IN POSITION) It was sweet of you!

AMY

You darling! (THEY KISS LORD FANCOURT; JACK AND CHARLEY REACT)

CHARLEY

Look at him, Jack!

JACK

I'll punch his head in if he does it again! (A KNOCK AT THE DOOR, AND BRASSETT ENTERS R, MOVING TO ARCHWAY UC TO ADMIT THE CALLER. TO CHARLEY) Here's my father. (LORD FANCOURT CROSSES TOWARDS DR ARMCHAIR) Donna Lucia! (JACK STOPS LORD FANCOURT) Take care, here's my father. (CHARLEY CROSSES BEHIND ARMCHAIR TO WATCH LORD FANCOURT, AND AMY AND KITTY CROSS DL, AMY R OF KITTY. LORD FANCOURT CROSSES TO ARMCHAIR, AND SITS)

LORD FANCOURT

Look here, am I any relation to him? (CHARLEY CROSSES TO L OF LORD FANCOURT'S CHAIR)

JACK

No; you're Charley's aunt, from Brazil.

LORD FANCOURT

You know--er--where the nuts come from. (SIR FRANCIS ENTERS UC, AT R SIDE OF ARCHWAY, GIVING HIS HAT, STICK AND GLOVES TO BRASSETT, WHO FOLLOWS HIM IN. BRASSETT PLACES THEM IN THE RECESS. JACK CROSSES UP TO R OF SIR FRANCIS)

JACK

(INTRODUCING) Miss Verdun, my father.

SIR FRANCIS

Delighted. (KITTY CURTSEYS)

JACK

Miss Spettigue, my father. (AMY CURTSEYS)

SIR FRANCIS

Charmed. (MOVES DOWNSTAGE, AND BECKONS JACK WHO CROSSES DOWN TO HIM. ASIDE, TO JACK) Now, Jack, has she come? (BRASSETT EXITS R)

JACK

Oh, yes, she's come. Go on, Charley, introduce your aunt. (SIR FRANCIS CROSSES R TOWARDS CHAIR DR)

CHARLEY

(TO LORD FANCOURT) Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez, Sir Francis Chesney, Jack's father. (SIR FRANCIS STARES AT LORD FANCOURT)

LORD FANCOURT

How do you do, Sir Francis?

SIR FRANCIS

(RATHER BLANKLY) How do you do?

LORD FANCOURT

I'm Charley's aunt from Brazil—where the nuts come from. (CHARLEY KICKS LORD FANCOURT, WHO REACTS, THEN CHARLEY MOVES ABOVE TABLE, C, TO AMY)

SIR FRANCIS

(ASIDE, TO JACK) I say, Jack!

JACK

(CROSSES TO L OF SIR FRANCIS) Yes?

SIR FRANCIS

Is that the lady?

JACK

Eh? Yes. (SIR FRANCIS POINTS TO THE FLOWER HE HAS WORN IN HIS BUTTONHOLE AND HIS NEWLY-DONNED FORMAL WAISTCOAT AND CHECK TROUSERS) Yes.

SIR FRANCIS

(AGHAST) Oh, by George! (TURNS UPSTAGE, STARTING TO MAKE FOR ARCHWAY UC)

JACK

(CATCHES HIS ARM AND SPINS SIR FRANCIS AROUND) Oh, don't go, Dad!
(CROSSES TO R OF LORD FANCOURT. ASIDE, TO HIM) Go on, Charley's told you all about him.

LORD FANCOURT

(REPEATING LIKE A PARROT; TO SIR FRANCIS) Charley's told you all about him.

JACK

(WHISPERING) No, no!

LORD FANCOURT

(TO SIR FRANCIS) No, no!

JACK

(WHISPERING, AND PROMPTING HIM) My nephew Charles.

LORD FANCOURT

(TO SIR FRANCIS) My nephew Charles has told me so much about you--

JACK

(WITH A PROD--ASIDE) --in his letters--

LORD FANCOURT

In his letters--in his letters-- (ASIDE TO JACK) That's all right, isn't it?

JACK

(VICIOUSLY) No, it isn't.

LORD FANCOURT

Do it yourself! (SULKS)

SIR FRANCIS

I'm much obliged to Mr. Wykeham, but I only met him today for the first time.

JACK

(ASIDE, TO LORD FANCOURT) See! (ALOUD, TO SIR FRANCIS) Yes, but Dad, I've been simply photographing you to Charley for years.

LORD FANCOURT

(TO SIR FRANCIS, BRIGHTENING) Oh yes, he's a splendid photographer!

JACK

(CROSSING ABOVE LORD FANCOURT'S CHAIR, TO L OF IT. ASIDE) Remember you've only just come to England, and you've never seen Charley till today.

LORD FANCOURT

Why the deuce didn't you say so before? (BRASSETT ENTERS R AND CROSSES ABOVE SIR FRANCIS TO ABOVE TABLE, C)

SIR FRANCIS

Jack! (JACK CROSSES TO HIM) My dear boy, (ASIDE) it's impossible!

JACK

What, Dad?

SIR FRANCIS

(LOOKING AT LORD FANCOURT) Well--look at her!

JACK

Eh? (SUDDENLY REMEMBERING HIS SUGGESTION OF MARRIAGE) Oh, good gracious!

BRASSETT

Luncheon is ready, sir. (CHARLEY TAKES KITTY AND AMY TO TABLE, C, AND SEATS AMY IN CHAIR WHICH WAS ORIGINALLY ABOVE THE TABLE. BRASSETT MOVES DL AND BRINGS CHAIR FROM ABOVE DESK TO L OF TABLE, THEN CROSSING UR TO R OF FIREPLACE)

JACK

(ASIDE, TO LORD FANCOURT) Take my father, and be careful how you talk to him. (TO SIR FRANCIS) Dad, will you take Donna Lucia? (JACK CROSSES ABOVE TABLE TO ABOVE KITTY, AND ASSISTS HER TO A SEAT IN THE CHAIR BRASSETT HAS BROUGHT FROM THE DESK; HE REMAINS ABOVE HIS OWN CHAIR BETWEEN KITTY AND AMY. BRASSETT BRINGS CHAIR R OF FIREPLACE TO DR CORNER OF TABLE, THEN EXITS R) (SEE FIGURE 4)

SIR FRANCIS

(OFFERING ARM TO LORD FANCOURT) Allow me, Donna Lucia. (LORD FANCOURT RISES, AND MOVES WITH SIR FRANCIS TO CHAIR WHICH BRASSETT HAS JUST PLACED R OF TABLE. SIR FRANCIS SEATS LORD FANCOURT, AND BRASSETT RE-ENTERS R WITH A STOOL FOR CHARLEY, WHICH HE PLACES ABOVE TABLE, NEXT TO AMY)

LORD FANCOURT

You'll sit beside me, won't you, Sir Francis? (SIR FRANCIS TAKES THE CHAIR WHICH HAS REMAINED R OF TABLE, ABOVE LORD FANCOURT)

SIR FRANCIS

I shall be delighted. (HE SITS, AND JACK AND CHARLEY FOLLOW SUIT, TURNING THEIR ATTENTION TO THE DISHES BRASSETT HAS DEPOSITED ON THE TABLE JUST BEFORE ANNOUNCING LUNCHEON. BRASSETT IS LOOKING ABOUT FOR THE CHAMPAGNE DURING THIS SCENE) You've travelled a great deal, I suppose?

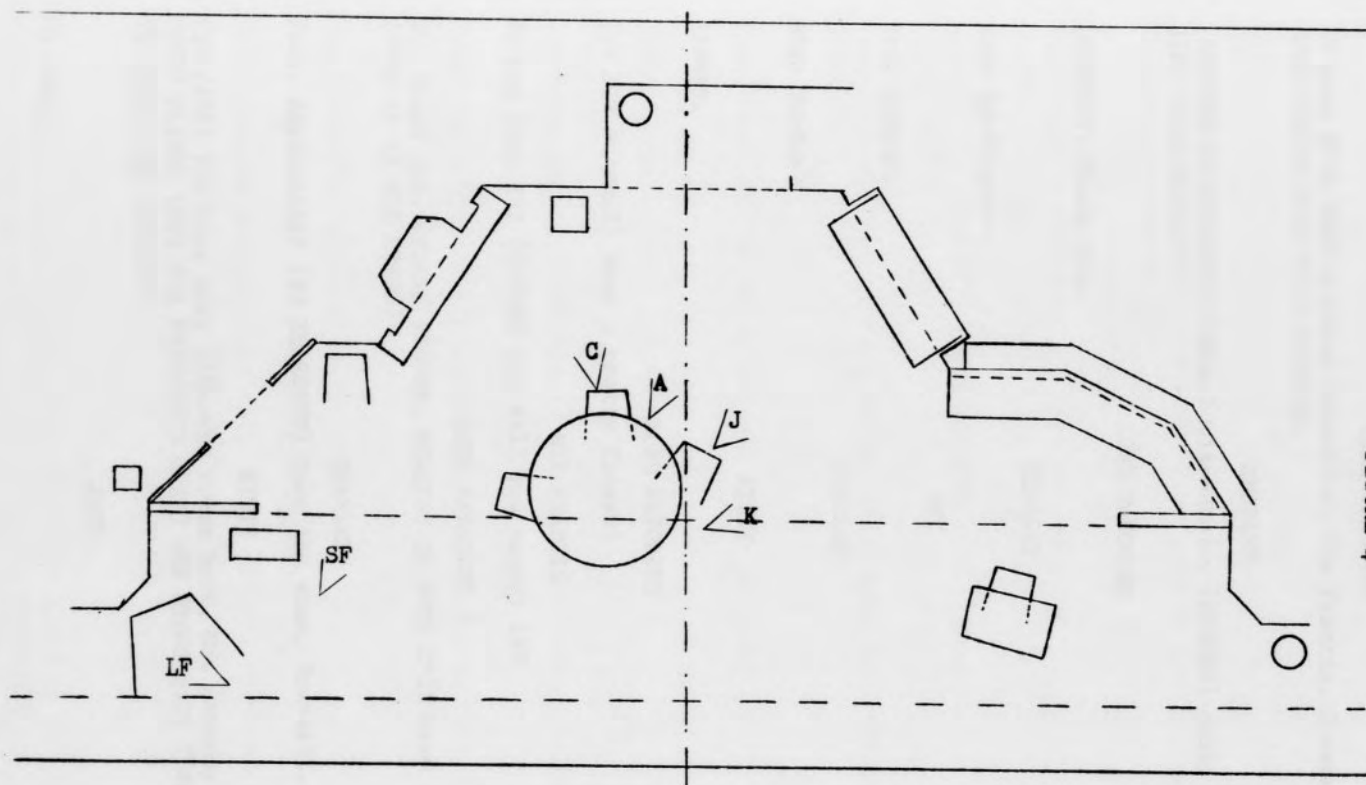


FIGURE 4

CHARLEY'S AUNT: ACT I

SCALE: $3/8" = 1'$

LORD FANCOURT

Oh yes, I've been a great traveller, Sir Francis. I came all the way from London only this morning.

CHARLEY

(SERVING MAYONNAISE) Donna Lucia--Aunt-- (LOUDER) Aunt! (JACK GLARES AT HIM) --mayonnaise?

LORD FANCOURT

(SWEETLY) Thank you.

CHARLEY

Miss Spettigue--

AMY

Yes, please.

CHARLEY

Miss Verdun?

KITTY

Please.

LORD FANCOURT

(TO SIR FRANCIS) What a pretty flower!

SIR FRANCIS

Do you like it? (OFFERS IT) Will you accept it?

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, thank you. (TAKES FLOWER, HOLDING IT OUT) I'll have it stuffed.
(PUTS IT IN HIS DRESS)

CHARLEY

Jack, mayonnaise? (TO BRASSETT) Open the wine, Brassett.

KITTY

(TO JACK) You have very pleasant rooms here, Mr. Chesney. (BRASSETT
POURS CLARET INTO SIR FRANCIS'S GLASS AND STEPS BACK TOWARDS FIREPLACE
TO AWAIT THE RESULTS)

JACK

Oh yes.

AMY

Oh yes, they're awfully nice rooms, Mr. Chesney, I'm sure. Don't you think so, Sir Francis?

SIR FRANCIS

Pleasanter today than usual, I fancy. Donna Lucia, may I have the pleasure? (SIPS WINE, BUT PUTS GLASS DOWN IN DISGUST) Jack, my boy, where did you get this stuff?

AMY

May I have a little water, please?

JACK

(STANDS; TO BRASSETT) Open the champagne, Brasset.

BRASSETT

(EMBARRASSED) I--I can't find it, sir. (LORD FANCOURT CHUCKLES TO HIMSELF)

JACK

Can't find it? Do you know where it is, Charley?

CHARLEY

(STANDS) No.

JACK

(TO BRASSETT, STERNLY) What's become of it? I thought it was in ice.

LORD FANCOURT

(TAPS TABLE WITH SPOON, AND THEY ALL LOOK AT HIM) What is it? What do you want?

JACK

The champagne, Donna Lucia.

LORD FANCOURT

What, haven't you got any? Well, I thought you'd forget something, so I brought some with me in my bag-- In my bag, Brasset. (BRASSETT CROSSES TO FIREPLACE, REMOVES TWO BOTTLES OF CHAMPAGNE, AND TAKES THEM TO SIDEBOARD. JACK AND CHARLEY SIT. SPETTIGUE ENTERS, UC, IN A RAGE WITH HAT ON)

SPETTIGUE

Ah! (GENERAL CONSTERNATION. AMY AND KITTY CROSS DL OF DESK, SHAKING. CHARLEY RISES AND STEPS UR; JACK MOVES TO SIDEBOARD UL. LORD FANCOURT RISES AND MOVES DR OF SIR FRANCIS, WHO REMAINS SEATED)

AMY and KITTY

Uncle!

JACK and CHARLEY

Mr. Spettigue!

SPETTIGUE

(SEES GIRLS) So, I was right after all, and that old fool of a woman told me they were not here.

JACK

(GAILY) Oh, Mr. Spettigue--

SPETTIGUE

(CROSSES TO R OF JACK) Don't address me, sir! (JACK IS TAKEN ABACK)
And this (TO THE GIRLS) is the way you take advantage of my absence! (HE
HAS MOVED A FEW STEPS IN THEIR DIRECTION)

JACK

(CROSSES D TO R OF SPETTIGUE) Mr. Spettigue!

SPETTIGUE

Don't address me, sir! I have no wish to hold any converse with you.

CHARLEY

(CROSSING TO ABOVE CHAIR L OF TABLE, R OF JACK) But won't you allow us to explain?

SPETTIGUE

(CROSSING TOWARDS CHARLEY, BELOW JACK) My business is with this young man, sir, and not with you.

LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSING DC, BELOW TABLE) But you won't listen to either of them!

SPETTIGUE

(INSOLENTLY) Go away, madam, and don't interfere.

LORD FANCOURT

Where did you get that hat? Take it off, sir! (SPETTIGUE TAKES OFF HAT)

JACK

(TO SPETTIGUE) You forget yourself, sir.

SIR FRANCIS

(RISES) Perhaps you will remember, sir, that ladies are present.

SPETTIGUE

(LOFTILY) I disapprove of their presence and request them to return with me.

JACK

We can discuss this matter on a more fitting occasion.

LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSING DL TO DESK) Certainly. A most excellent suggestion. Let him call again.

SPETTIGUE

You're a very foolish old woman, and I must beg of you not to interfere. Ladies, come! (KITTY AND AMY START TO MOVE TOWARDS SPETTIGUE, BUT LORD FANCOURT PUTS OUT HIS ARMS TO BAR THE WAY, AND EACH TAKES HIS ARM INSTEAD. LORD FANCOURT ESCORTS THEM FURTHER DL, L OF DESK)

SIR FRANCIS

(CROSSING DC, BELOW TABLE) Sir, you cannot put some such affront upon Mr. Wykeham's friends.

SPETTIGUE

(ABSENTLY AND IMPATIENTLY) I don't know them; I don't know them.

SIR FRANCIS

(TO CHARLEY) Introduce me, Mr. Wykeham.

CHARLEY

Mr. Spettigue--Sir Francis Chesney. (SPETTIGUE BARELY ACKNOWLEDGES THE INTRODUCTION)

SIR FRANCIS

(CROSSES TO R OF SPETTIGUE) Mr. Chesney is my son, sir; and (TURNING TO LORD FANCOURT) this lady is--

LORD FANCOURT

(STANDING BETWEEN THE GIRLS, AND AFFECTING HURT FEELINGS) Pray don't introduce him to me. I've been sufficiently insulted by the old boun--er--gentleman--already.

SPETTIGUE

(CROSSING D TO R OF DESK, TOWARDS LORD FANCOURT. JACK MOVES BACK TO SIDEBBOARD) I consult my own feelings when I say that I am deeply annoyed to find on prematurely returning from town, my niece and my ward lunching, without my permission, with these two young gentlemen.

SIR FRANCIS

(STEPPING DOWNSTAGE) To meet Mr. Wykeham's aunt.

SPETTIGUE

(WITH INSULTING DISBELIEF) Indeed! (CONFRONTS SIR FRANCIS)

SIR FRANCIS

(ANGER RISING) There is no "Indeed" about it, sir! I repeat, to meet Mr. Wykeham's aunt.

SPETTIGUE

In my mind it matters little.

SIR FRANCIS

In my mind it matters everything, therefore-- (KITTY AND AMY LET GO OF LORD FANCOURT'S ARMS) --allow me to introduce you. (TO LORD FANCOURT) Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez! Mr.-- (ASIDE TO JACK) What's his confounded name, Jack?

SPETTIGUE

(ASIDE, TO HIMSELF) Donna Lucia--

JACK

(STEPS DOWNSTAGE) Spettigue.

SIR FRANCIS

(FINISHING INTRODUCTION) Mr. Spettigue.

SPETTIGUE

(SURPRISED, ASIDE) The celebrated millionaire? (THE BOYS NOTICE THE CHANGE THAT COMES OVER SPETTIGUE. HE MOVES DL TO R OF LORD FANCOURT) Oh, how do you do?

LORD FANCOURT

(COMES TO SPETTIGUE) How do you do. I am Charley's aunt from Brazil, (TURNS TO AUDIENCE) where the nuts come from. (JACK PUSHES LORD FANCOURT WHO FALLS AGAINST SPETTIGUE, TRIES TO TURN THE FALL INTO AN AWKWARD CURTSEY BY MOVING R OF SPETTIGUE, AND TO SAVE HIS BALANCE STAGGERS TO R OF SIR FRANCIS)

SPETTIGUE

(MOVES DC BELOW TABLE, ASIDE) I've been indiscreet. (CROSSES TO L OF LORD FANCOURT, AND SIR FRANCIS MOVES UL TO WINDOW, HIS TASK ACCOMPLISHED) Oh, I am sorry, very, very sorry. (CHARLEY MOVES D TO AMY, AND STARTS BRINGING HER TO HER SEAT AT THE TABLE ONCE AGAIN)

JACK

(TO LORD FANCOURT) Go on, he's apologised. Ask him to lunch. (JACK MOVES DL, COLLECTS KITTY, AND SEATS HER AT THE LUNCHEON TABLE. BOTH JACK AND CHARLEY REMAIN STANDING BEHIND THEIR RESPECTIVE CHAIRS)

LORD FANCOURT

(TO SPETTIGUE) Well, I thought you were very rude, but if you apologise, you know--

SPETTIGUE

(QUICKLY) Oh, by all means. I am sorry, I am very sorry. (BRASSETT STARTS MOVING D TO SPETTIGUE, FROM SIDEBOARD, ABOVE TABLE)

LORD FANCOURT

You'll stay to lunch, won't you? (BRASSETT TAKES HAT AND GLOVES FROM SPETTIGUE AND RETURNS TO ARCHWAY ALCOVE WITH THEM, UC. MUSIC STARTS VERY FAINTLY: CONCERTO IN THE ITALIAN STYLE (J. S. BACH) --THIRD MOVEMENT, HARPSICHORD)

SPETTIGUE

If you wish it--and I am forgiven?

LORD FANCOURT

Forgiven! (TAKES FLOWER FROM DRESS) Here, accept this as a peace offering. (PUTS SIR FRANCIS'S FLOWER INTO SPETTIGUE'S COAT)

SIR FRANCIS

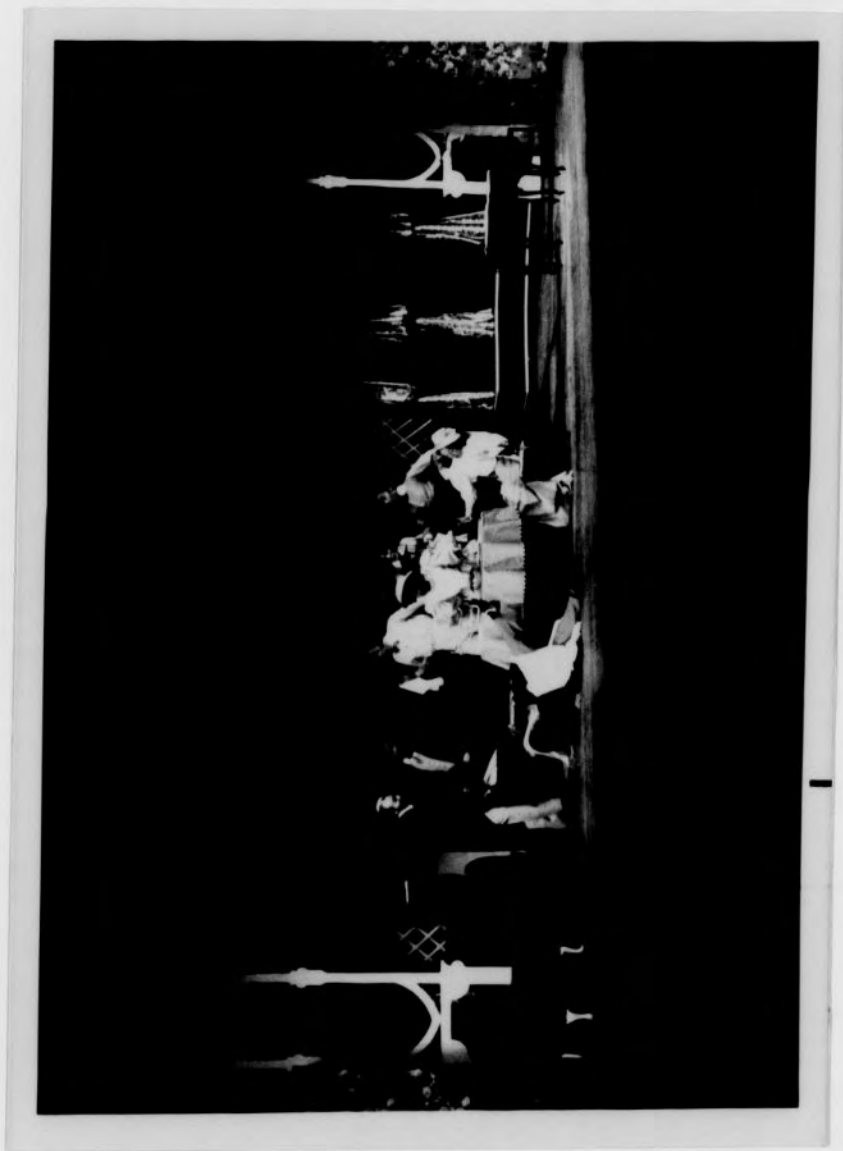
(SEES THIS; REACTS WITH A TAKE) My flower! (VERY SWIFTLY MOVES ABOVE TABLE, CIRCLING TO R OF LORD FANCOURT. OFFERS HIS ARM) Allow me, Donna Lucia. (BRASSETT MOVES TO ABOVE TABLE, READY TO ASSIST WITH SERVING)

SPETTIGUE

(OFFERS HIS ARM) No, allow me. (LORD FANCOURT HESITATES, FLUTTERS EYELASHES AT THEM BOTH, THEN CHOOSES SPETTIGUE'S ARM. AS THEY MOVE TOWARDS TABLE, SIR FRANCIS SWIFTLY MOVES AROUND TO DR CHAIR, OFFERING IT TO LORD FANCOURT. THE MUSIC BEGINS TO SWELL IN VOLUME. AS LORD FANCOURT PREPARES TO SIT, SPETTIGUE TAKES THE DOWNSTAGE SIDE OF THE CHAIR TO ASSIST, WHILE SIR FRANCIS HAS THE UPSTAGE. AS THEY CHALLENGE EACH OTHER, THE CHAIR IS DRAWN BACK, AND LORD FANCOURT FINDS HIMSELF SITTING ON THE FLOOR, LEGS IN THE AIR. THE OTHERS REACT WITH SCREAMS AND EXCLAMATIONS, ALL STARING AT LORD FANCOURT IN HORROR. ALL FREEZE

IN EXAGGERATED ATTITUDES--SEE FIGURE 5--AND HOLD THE TABLEAU. AFTER A THREE-COUNT, THE LIGHTS FADE QUICKLY, AND THE CURTAIN FALLS. HOUSE LIGHTS UP, AND MUSIC CUTS OFF AT CLIMAX)

FIGURE 5



ACT TWO

"While there's tea there's hope."--Pinero.

HOUSE LIGHTS FADE. WHEN THEY ARE DOWN TO HALF, MUSIC STARTS: CONCERTO IN B-FLAT FOR THREE OBOES AND THREE VIOLINS (G. P. TELEMANN) --FIRST MOVEMENT. HOUSE FADE CONTINUES TO BLACKOUT. CURTAIN RISES, AND STAGE LIGHTS COME UP.

TIME: AFTERNOON.

SCENE: EXTERIOR OF JACK CHESNEY'S ROOMS. (SEE FIGURE 6)

AT RISE: BRASSETT IS DISCOVERED STANDING ABOVE TABLE, WITH CIGARETTE BOX, ASHTRAY AND MATCHBOX ON SALVER, WHICH HE PLACES ON THE TABLE. THE MUSIC FADES.

BRASSETT

Well, we're sailing along. He makes a wonderful old lady--not a doubt about it. (CROSSES TO CHAIR R OF TABLE) A bit singular to look at, perhaps, but then look at some of your old ladies! Nobody'd believe 'em possible, and he don't seem a bit worse to look at than two or three I could mention holding very 'igh positions, too. Both the old gents have got their eye on her. (CHUCKLES) Lor'!--if only they knew. I fancy Sir Francis is favourite, although old Spettigue fancies himself-- (CHUCKLES LOUDLY) Well, College gents'll do anything! (JACK ENTERS UR, CROSSING ABOVE TABLE TO L OF CHAIR L OF IT. HE NOW WEARS A SLEEVELESS SWEATER OVER HIS SHIRT, AND A STRAW BOATER)

JACK

(TO BRASSETT, SEVERELY) What are you laughing at, eh?

BRASSETT

Beg pardon, sir--I was thinking of an old aunt o' mine--

JACK

Eh?

BRASSETT

(RESPECTFULLY) Uncle, I mean.

JACK

Mind your own business, and go and get tea--do you see? Tea.

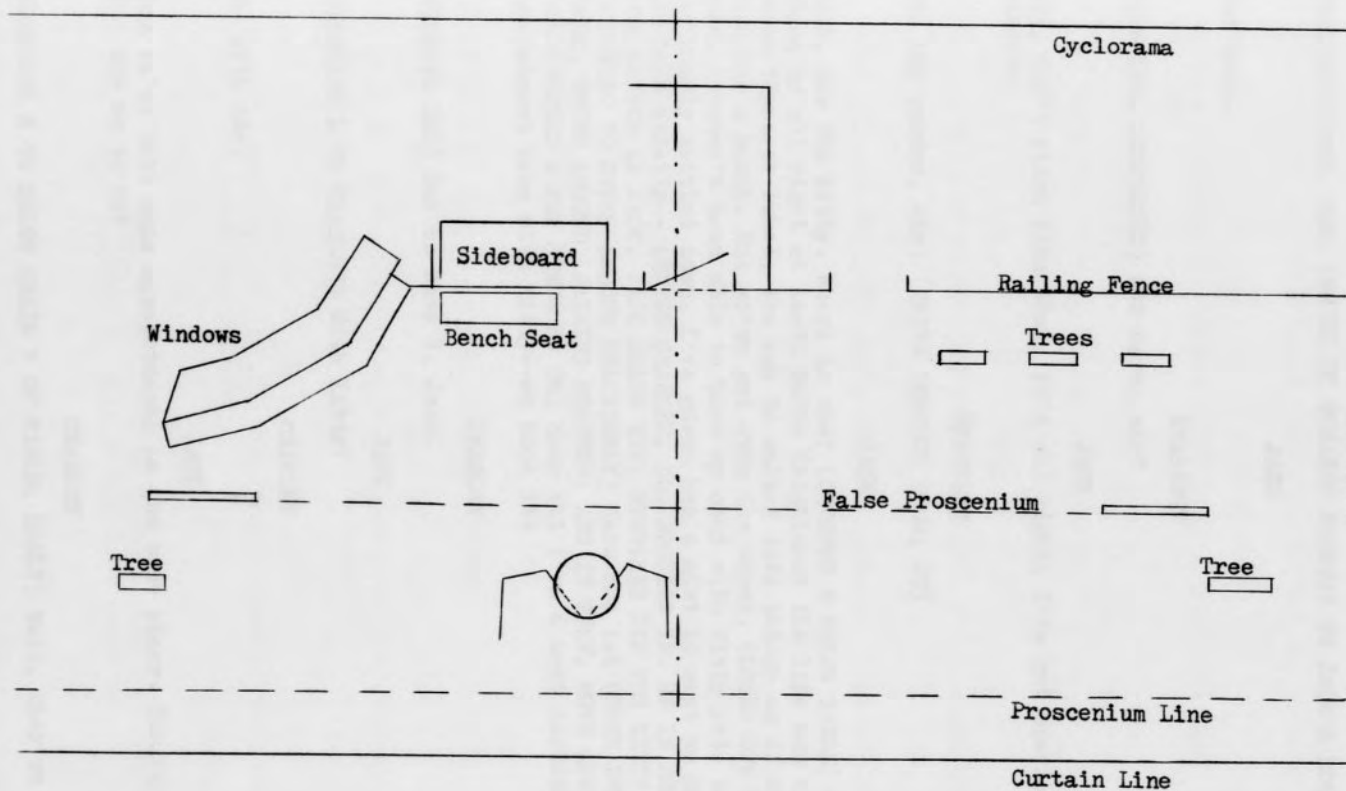


FIGURE 6

CHARLEY'S AUNT: ACT II

SCALE: $3/8" = 1'$

BRASSETT

Tea, sir; yes, sir. (MOVES UC TOWARDS DOORWAY TO JACK'S ROOMS)

JACK

Out here.

BRASSETT

(TURNING, SURPRISED) Out here, sir?

JACK

Yes, don't stare like that, it's all right. I've got special permission.

BRASSETT

Oh, beg pardon, sir. (EXITS THROUGH DOOR, UC)

JACK

Well, now for Kitty. Where is she? (CROSSES D BELOW TABLE) Everything's going on all right at last. Babbs frightened the life out of me two or three times at lunch, the way he walked into things as if he hadn't had food for a month. But we've got over the worst. (LOOKS OFF R) All the same, I haven't been able to have my chat with Kitty yet, but now they're all nicely settled down, I've given her a hint to meet me here, where we can talk quietly-- (ENTER CHARLEY, DL, BACKING IN. HE IS DRESSED IN THE SAME MANNER AS JACK. JACK HEARS HIM, MISTAKES HIM FOR KITTY, BACKING L, INTENDING TO SWING AROUND GRACIOUSLY) Here she is! (THEY BUMP INTO EACH OTHER, SWING AROUND, RAISING BOATERS, AND IN TURN, MOVE AWAY IN DISGUST. JACK CROSSES A FEW STEPS R) Oh, hang it! I've a most particular appointment here with Kitty--so hook it!

CHARLEY

(CROSSES DLC) But so have I, Jack.

JACK

(CROSSING L TO CHARLEY) With Kitty?

CHARLEY

No, with Amy.

JACK

Then we've both made appointments in the same place. Confound it all, what are we to do?

CHARLEY

(CROSSING R TO BELOW CHAIR R OF TABLE, SADLY) Well, they're your rooms.

JACK

(AGGRESSIVELY) Yes, but you're my guest! (SUDDENLY) Here, come on (FEELS IN POCKET, HAS NOTHING) we'll toss for it. Got any money?

CHARLEY

(FEELS IN POCKETS; PRODUCES A HALFPENNY) A ha'penny, that's all. (CROSSES L TO JACK)

JACK

(TAKES HALFPENNY) Sudden death. (TOSSES) Heads, you and Amy, tails me and-- (SEES KITTY OFF DR) Here she is! (POCKETS COIN AND CROSSES TO DR)

CHARLEY

(CROSSING TO L OF CHAIR L OF TABLE) Jack, that's all the money I've got!

KITTY

(ENTERS DR, AND MOVES TO JACK) Oh, Mr. Chesney, there you are.

JACK

(WITH A LOOK AT CHARLEY) Yes, I'm here--in fact, waiting-- (ANOTHER LOOK AT CHARLEY. ASIDE, TO KITTY) I was beginning to fear you wouldn't come. (CROSSES TO R OF CHARLEY, ASIDE) Why don't you go? (KITTY CROSSES TO CHAIR R OF TABLE, AND SITS, FOLDING THE PARASOL SHE NOW CARRIES) Have you no tact? (AMY ENTERS UL, ALSO WITH PARASOL)

CHARLEY

(ASIDE, TO JACK) But what about me and Amy?

AMY

(SEES CHARLEY) Ah, there you are, Mr. Wykeham.

CHARLEY

(CROSSING UP TO R OF AMY) Yes, I was coming--I was waiting, I'm here. (LOOKS ARE EXCHANGED BETWEEN JACK AND CHARLEY)

JACK

(A STEP TOWARDS CHARLEY, AT DC) Oh, I say, Charley, have you shown Miss Spettigue all round the garden?

CHARLEY

(CLOUDILY) Yes, Jack, I have--two or three times! In fact, we've just come from there. (ASIDE, TO AMY) I wish he'd leave us.

JACK

(AFTER A PAUSE--TO AMY) Er--lovely garden, isn't it?

AMY

Yes, I suppose it is.

JACK

(CATCHING AT IT) "Suppose?" Oh, you haven't seen half of it. (JACK MOVES BETWEEN CHARLEY AND AMY, PROPELLING THEM DC THEN DR. ALL THREE ARE R OF TABLE AND CHAIRS, WITH AMY FURTHEST RIGHT--INERTIA HAS CARRIED HER THERE--AND CHARLEY NEXT TO HER) Charley, Miss Spettigue hasn't seen half the garden. Take her and show her the roses and primroses, and cabbages and things.

CHARLEY

(RESISTING) But, Jack, I-- (KITTY, AMUSED, RISES AND MOVES UL OF TABLE)

JACK

And, Charley, tell Miss Spettigue those beautiful lines of yours-- "To Our Garden in Summer."

CHARLEY

(ASIDE TO JACK, ANXIOUSLY) Jack, don't tell her I write poetry. She'll think I'm an awful ass.

JACK

(PUSHING CHARLEY TO AMY) And don't you forget, Miss Spettigue, tea in half an hour.

AMY

Oh, very well, Mr. Chesney.

CHARLEY

(FOLLOWS AMY AS SHE EXITS DR, THEN TURNS BACK. ASIDE, TO JACK) But, Jack, the others are in the garden, and it worries the life out of me to see Babbs.

JACK

Well, don't; it's a large garden--keep out of his way. (PUSHES CHARLEY TOWARDS DR EXIT, AND CHARLEY FOLLOWS AMY OFF R. JACK LITERALLY BRUSHES HIS HANDS OF THE WHOLE BUSINESS, AND MOVES ABOVE TABLE TO R OF KITTY) At last, Miss Verdun--my dear Kitty--we are alone!

KITTY

(MOVES COQUETTISHLY TO L OF CHAIR L OF TABLE, TEASING) Don't you think it was rather selfish of us, Mr. Chesney, to send them away like that?

JACK

Well, we tossed for it.

KITTY

(TURNING--IN MOCK SURPRISE) What?

JACK

I mean--er--they'll be much happier together, alone; and it seems as if I could never get five minutes with you safe from some miserable interruption. (MOVES TO L OF KITTY, CLOSE TO HER) Indeed, I was beginning to fear you'd think me very rude, neglecting you as I have done.

KITTY

(AN UNDERCURRENT OF TEASING RUNNING THROUGH THIS SCENE) Oh no, not at all, I quite understand. I couldn't expect you to devote yourself entirely to me. (KITTY STEPS DL) Indeed, we've had a very pleasant time, and now--

JACK

(FOLLOWS KITTY, TO R OF HER) Yes, and now?

KITTY

(CROSSES BELOW JACK, TO BELOW CHAIR L OF TABLE) I was thinking we ought to be going now.

JACK

Go? Now? Good gracious, no!

KITTY

(RAISING HER EYEBROWS) Why not?

JACK

Before I've had a word with you? (ENTHUSING) Oh, my dear Miss Verdun-- (PUTS AN ARM AROUND HER WAIST) Kitty-- (KITTY PULLS AWAY A STEP TO R) Won't you sit down? (STEPPING BACK TO L AND INDICATING CHAIR L OF TABLE) I have something to say to you of importance.

KITTY

(SITS) Indeed, Mr. Chesney?

JACK

Yes. (CROSSING ABOVE TABLE TO R OF CHAIR R OF TABLE) You know, Miss Verdun, there are times when a fellow's got to think a lot and think long.

KITTY

I suppose so.

JACK

(MOVING A FEW STEPS DR) And there are times when a fellow musn't stop to think, or if he does, he'll spoil his chance!

KITTY

Yes.

JACK

(CROSSES TO R OF HER, ABOUT TO TAKE HER HAND) Well, then, Miss Verdun-- (SIR FRANCIS ENTERS UR, AND CROSSES TO ABOVE TABLE, STOPPING WHEN HE SEES THEM) Kitty--my dear Kitty--

SIR FRANCIS

Oh, I beg pardon. (KITTY RISES AND STEPS DL; JACK MOVES R A FEW STEPS. SIR FRANCIS MOVES D TO ABOVE TABLE) No, don't mind me. I only wanted a word with my boy here.

KITTY

(TO SIR FRANCIS) Oh, then, I'll run into the garden--and see the roses and primroses-- (CROSSES LC, STOPS, AND TURNING CATCHES JACK'S EYE) --and cabbages and things. (LC EXIT)

JACK

Well, Dad--anything important?

SIR FRANCIS

(CROSSES AROUND TABLE TO DL OF IT) Yes, Jack, it is.

JACK

Oh, what is it?

SIR FRANCIS

You know I'd do anything to see you get on in the world, and make a mark--as I know you will, if you get your chance--

JACK

You needn't tell me all this, Dad.

SIR FRANCIS

Well, Jack, having thought it over, I've decided that you shall continue the career I originally mapped out for you, and seeing a way out of the difficulty, I've determined to take your advice, my boy, and marry a lady of wealth.

JACK

(SITS ON TABLETOP, R SIDE) I see, you've fallen a victim to the fascinations of some young and lovely--

SIR FRANCIS

No, Jack, she's not "lovely"--and I'm afraid she is not over "young"--but she has one thing in her favour, she has money--which, after all, is the real object in this instance.

JACK

All right, Dad, as long as you are satisfied, go in and win!

SIR FRANCIS

And I have you to thank, my boy, for the tip.

JACK

Thank me for the tip? I don't remember, Dad. Who is she? What's her name?

SIR FRANCIS

You'll be delighted when I tell you.

JACK

Yes. Well?

SIR FRANCIS

Can't you guess?

JACK

No, Dad, I can't!

SIR FRANCIS

Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez. (SLAPS JACK JOVIALY ON THE SHOULDER)

JACK

What? (STANDS, AND STRIDES TOWARDS R) The deuce! (STOPS, TURNS, AND MOVES TO R OF SIR FRANCIS) Dad, this is impossible!

SIR FRANCIS

Impossible? Why, you yourself suggested it, and for your sake, my lad, I'm going to do it. (MOVES L A FEW STEPS)

JACK

But, Dad--you can't!

SIR FRANCIS

Can't? Why not? (LOOKS BACK TO JACK) Is there anything against the lady's reputation?

JACK

No, but--you musn't--you can't!

SIR FRANCIS

"Musn't," "can't"! Why, Jack, what a boy you are! Didn't you tell me to go to the hotel--change my things--put a flower in my buttonhole--and, by George, Jack, I believe the flower's done the trick!

JACK

She gave it away, Dad.

SIR FRANCIS

My dear boy, she's explained all that. (MOVES FURTHER L)

JACK

(STEPS DOWNSTAGE, ASIDE) This is horrible! (CROSSES TO R OF SIR FRANCIS) But, Dad, circumstances have altered since then.

SIR FRANCIS

In what way?

JACK

You know you're too good--you're not the man to be thrown away like this!

SIR FRANCIS

(PLACES HAND ON JACK'S SHOULDER) Say no more, my boy--your consideration for me settles it. It will put you forward years. Had she been young and lovely, she wouldn't have looked at me. As it is, I flatter myself she's taken rather a fancy to me, and as for old Spettigue, in spite of his marked attentions, I don't think he has the ghost of a chance with me. (MOVES TOWARDS UL)

JACK

(STEPS DOWNSTAGE, ASIDE) Old Spettigue--attentions-- Great Heavens, what are we doing? (CROSSES TO R OF SIR FRANCIS) Dad!

SIR FRANCIS

So wish me luck, Jack, wish me luck.

JACK

Take time, Dad, think it over.

SIR FRANCIS

(HEROICALLY) "Think it over!" That's not the way an old soldier makes love. (CROSSES TO UC DOOR; TURNS BACK TO JACK) I'm going into your rooms to get myself a rattling good spanking brandy and soda to bring me up to the mark! (EXITS UC, THROUGH DOORWAY)

JACK

(CROSSES D TO CHAIR L OF TABLE) Great Scot--what's the young monkey doing?

CHARLEY

(ENTERS RC, JUST BELOW FALSE PROSCENIUM, AND CROSSES TO JACK, BELOW TABLE) Jack! Jack! I wish you'd speak to Babbs--he's carrying on disgracefully. He's taken Amy away from me, and gone off round the garden with her.

JACK

Well, that's nothing to what's going on here. (SOUND OF CLINKING OF DECANter AND SODAWATER SIPHON IN JACK'S ROOMS) Hear that?

CHARLEY

Yes, what is it?

JACK

My dad getting himself a "rattling good spanking brandy and soda."

CHARLEY

Brandy and soda? What for?

JACK

(CROSSES L) To propose to Babbs; that's all!

CHARLEY

(FOLLOWS HIM) I knew something awful would come of this. We shall be found out and disgraced. How could you let it go on?

JACK

Well, don't blame me--it was the fault of your muddle-headed aunt not knowing her own mind, and leaving us in the lurch. (CROSSES DC) I could strangle her.

CHARLEY

(FOLLOWS JACK, TO L OF HIM) What shall we do?

JACK

We must find Babbs, and put him up to the governor's game.

CHARLEY

(DAZED) "Find Babbs"--but, Jack--

JACK

(PULLS CHARLEY DR) Come on, we can go round the garden different ways until we've got him.

CHARLEY

(BREAKS WAY FROM JACK, ACROSS R) But, Jack, can't you end this horrible--

JACK

Oh, shut up, we must keep our heads now, or we'll ruin everything. Go on! (PUSHES CHARLEY OFF DR, THEN MOVES UP AND EXITS UR)

SIR FRANCIS

(ENTERS VIA DOOR UC, WIPING HIS MOUSTACHE AFTER THE DRINK, AND MOVES TO ABOVE TABLE) Now, I'm ready for anything--or anybody. (LOOKS AT WATCH) Why doesn't she come? I didn't tell the dear boy--more particularly when he raised objections--but she promised to meet me here in ten minutes--and time's up--time's up. (SPETTIGUE ENTERS RC, LOOKING OFF R, NOT SEEING SIR FRANCIS. SIR FRANCIS HEAR HIS STEP, AND THEY BOTH RAISE THEIR HATS) Ah, my dear Don-- (THEY MEET, AND TURN AWAY ABRUPTLY, SPETTIGUE STEPPING TOWARDS DR, SIR FRANCIS BACK TO TABLE, R OF IT) That old fool Spettigue! (ASIDE) And with my flower in his coat! (TO SPETTIGUE) Are you--er--looking for anybody?

SPETTIGUE

No. (LOOKS OFF R)

SIR FRANCIS

(ASIDE) What's he hanging about here for? (TAKES CIGARETTE FROM BOX ON TABLE, LIGHTS IT--PAUSE. TO SPETTIGUE, STRUGGLING TO BE CIVIL) Are you in want of anything?

SPETTIGUE

No. I was only thinking it was a very lovely afternoon. (CROSSES TO R OF SIR FRANCIS) Perhaps you haven't seen the garden? It's looking very beautiful. You ought to give it a good look before you go.

SIR FRANCIS

I will (SITS) --before I go. (LEANS TOWARDS L, ASIDE) What is he stopping here for? (BACK TO SPETTIGUE) Have a cigarette?

SPETTIGUE

No, thank you. (STROLLS ACROSS BELOW TABLE TO L OF IT) I never smoke in the daytime. (ASIDE) Why does he remain? (LOOKS AT HIS WATCH) She promised to meet me here in ten minutes, and time's up, time's up.

SIR FRANCIS

(ASIDE) What's he stopping for? I must tell him to go. (SPETTIGUE CROSSES TOWARDS DL)

SPETTIGUE

(ASIDE) I wish I could think of something to get rid of him.

SIR FRANCIS

(RISES, CROSSES DC, ALOUD TO SPETTIGUE) Well--as you are not smoking--

SPETTIGUE

Oh, don't mind me, (CROSSES ABOVE TABLE, TO UR OF IT) don't mind me!

SIR FRANCIS

(TURNING TO SPETTIGUE) I was only thinking perhaps it would be as well if you rejoined the ladies in the garden. They might think it rude, both of us being away-- (SITS IN CHAIR L OF TABLE)

SPETTIGUE

(CROSSES TOWARDS DR AREA) Perhaps so, perhaps so. (ASIDE) She's in the garden. (LOOKS BOTH R AND L, THEN EXITS DR)

SIR FRANCIS

(RISES, AFTER A MOMENT, AND CROSSES UC TO DOOR) Well, she doesn't appear to be coming. I think I'll go and have another--

JACK

(ENTERS RC, AND SEEING SIR FRANCIS, STOPS) I say, Dad, you haven't seen Donna Lucia, have you?

SIR FRANCIS

(MOVES D TO ABOVE TABLE) No, Jack, I've not.

JACK

(ASIDE) That's fortunate.

SIR FRANCIS

I'm waiting for her here.

JACK

Waiting for her--here?

SIR FRANCIS

Yes, I've an appointment with her. I didn't tell you before, Jack but she's due--in fact, she's overdue! So get out, my boy, get out! (LOOKS OFF R AND L)

JACK

(ASIDE) They musn't meet till I've seen him. (CROSSES TO R OF SIR FRANCIS) Now I come to think of it, Dad, I saw her only a moment ago.

SIR FRANCIS

Oh--where?

JACK

(POINTING OFF R) In the garden.

SIR FRANCIS

In the garden? Hang it, I've just sent old Spettigue there! (CROSSES HURRIEDLY TO RC, AND EXITS)

JACK

(CROSSES TO BELOW TABLE) I know Babbs isn't there, but where on earth has he got to? (CHARLEY ENTERS UR, AND JACK, HEARING HIM, TURNS) Well, have you found him?

CHARLEY

(CROSSES TO R OF JACK) No, haven't you?

JACK

No, (CROSSES LC) and I've looked all over the place for him.

CHARLEY

(CROSSES TO R OF TABLE) So have I, Jack, and the worst of it is he's got Amy with him. It's a shame.

JACK

I'll kill the little monkey when I get hold of him!

CHARLEY

(LOOKING OFF R, CATCHES SIGHT OF LORD FANCOURT AND AMY) Look at him! Isn't it too bad? (LORD FANCOURT AND AMY ENTER, TOGETHER, RC, AMY L OF LORD FANCOURT)

AMY

(CROSSES TO R OF CHARLEY) Ah, Mr. Wykeham, there you are. Did you think you'd lost us?

CHARLEY

Yes, I'm afraid I did.

JACK

(CROSSES QUICKLY TO L OF LORD FANCOURT. CHARLEY AND AMY CROSS DL) Where have you been (ASIDE) with that girl, you fool?

LORD FANCOURT

(TAKES A STEP OR TWO DR) Nowhere.

JACK

Stop where you are. I've something to tell you.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, have you? (FLOUNCES AROUND, KICKING SKIRT OUT BACKWARDS)

JACK

(CROSSING L TO CHARLEY AND AMY) Charley, has Miss Spettigue seen the Chapel? (MOVES BETWEEN THEM, CARRYING THEM FURTHER DL. AMY KEEPS GOING, BUT JACK HOLDS CHARLEY BACK. LORD FANCOURT FOLLOWS JACK, BUT REMAINS R OF HIM: AMY STOPS AND TURNS BACK. ASIDE TO CHARLEY) Take her away while I tell Babbs. (ALoud) you must see the Chapel. It's an awfully pretty Chapel. (AMY SMILES AND TURNS TOWARDS DL EXIT, WAITING)

CHARLEY

(LORD FANCOURT MOVES ABOVE JACK TO CHARLEY, AGGRESSIVELY) Jack, I'll punch his head in if he does it again. (CHARLEY MAKES A SWIPE AT LORD FANCOURT, WHO DUCKS AROUND BELOW JACK, TIPPING CHARLEY'S HAT OFF WITH HIS CLOSED FAN. CHARLEY RETRIEVES HAT, GRIMLY, AND JACK PUSHES HIM TOWARDS AMY. CHARLEY AND AMY EXIT DL)

JACK

(JACK FORCES LORD FANCOURT TO BACK UP IN A DC DIRECTION, SPEAKING AS HE DOES IT) What the deuce do you mean by this game?

LORD FANCOURT

What game?

JACK

You promised to help us.

LORD FANCOURT

Well, I'm doing my best.

JACK

Doing your best? Your business was to look after those two old chaps, and here you are-- (JACK CROSSES DL) but I've no wish to argue.

LORD FANCOURT

(MOVES D ABOVE JACK TO L OF HIM) No, I shouldn't argue if I were you.

JACK

(STARTS PACING TOWARDS R, THEN BACK TO SAME POSITION, L. LORD FANCOURT NIMBLY FOLLOWS BEHIND HIM, KEEPING IN STEP, MIMICKING THE IN-STEP MANNER IN WHICH JACK FORCED HIM TO BACK UP A FEW MOMENTS AGO. JACK SUDDENLY STOPS AND TURNS TO CONFRONT LORD FANCOURT) Listen! I want to put you on your guard.

LORD FANCOURT

On my guard! Oh, thank you!

JACK

Yes. My Dad's going to propose to you.

LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSING L, BELOW JACK) Oh, is he? That's all right. (STOPS SUDDENLY) Well, I'm not going to marry him for you or anybody else. I'll see you hanged first.

JACK

(CROSSING TO R OF LORD FANCOURT) Of course not, you idiot. All you've got to do is be calm and refuse him.

LORD FANCOURT

Calm and refuse him! But a proposal puts anyone in a flutter. You know that.

JACK

All you've got to do is remember that you're a real old lady.

LORD FANCOURT

How the dickens am I to remember that I'm a real old lady (LIFTS SKIRT AND PETTICOAT TOGETHER, SHOWING TROUSERS TO KNEES) --with my trousers on?

JACK

(PULLING DOWN LORD FANCOURT'S SKIRT) Never mind your trousers! Look out! (LOOKING OFF R, SEES SIR FRANCIS APPROACHING DR, AND CROSSES UR TO ESCAPE) Here's the Dad! I'm off!

LORD FANCOURT

(FOLLOWS HIM UR) Yes, but what am I to say? (ANXIOUSLY) I've never been proposed to before.

JACK

Oh--say he's taken you by surprise--but whatever you do, mind you refuse him. (EXITS UR; LORD FANCOURT CROSSES UL AND HIDES BEHIND R TREE)

SIR FRANCIS

(ENTERS DR, LOOKING AT WATCH. CROSSES TO BELOW TABLE) Really, it's too bad. She made the proposition herself--it was a definite proposition of her own--well, ladies are proverbially unpunctual, but--

LORD FANCOURT

(WAVES FROM BEHIND TREE) Oo! Oo! (HE IMMEDIATELY MAKES A DASH FOR THE DL TREE, AND HIDES BEHIND IT)

SIR FRANCIS

Ah, dear Donna Lucia, here you are! (TURNS AND MOVES TOWARDS THE PLACE HE HAS HEARD THE CALL COME FROM, ULC) I was beginning to be afraid, and popped into the garden to find you. (LORD FANCOURT IS NOT WHERE HE EXPECTED, SO SIR FRANCIS IS PUZZLED; HE CANNOT SEE HER, BUT LORD FANCOURT WHISTLES, AND SIR FRANCIS MOVES DL TO TREE. LORD FANCOURT FLOUNCES AROUND TREE IN AN ANTI-CLOCKWISE DIRECTION, INTENDING TO BOLT OFF R, BUT IS MET BY SIR FRANCIS, WHO ESCORTS HIM TO CHAIR L OF TABLE) Won't you sit down? (LORD FANCOURT SITS, AND SIR FRANCIS TAKES A FEW STEPS DL, ASIDE) By jove, got her at last! Now for the plunge! I'll begin with a compliment. (LOOKS AT LORD FANCOURT, THEN AWAY AGAIN) I wonder what's her real age? However, a woman's never too old for a compliment, so here goes! (MOVES BACK TO L OF LORD FANCOURT, CLEARS THROAT. LORD FANCOURT CLEARS THROAT, TOO. SIR FRANCIS ADDRESSES HIM) Donna Lucia, you'll pardon the rude metaphor of an old campaigner, I'm sure, (CROSSES ABOVE CHAIR TO UL OF TABLE) but to meet you today for the first time, as I have done, is to me like a lonely traveller coming across some--er--bright little floweret-- (THEIR EYES MEET) by the wayside.

LORD FANCOURT

(LOOKS L AND R, THEN TO SIR FRANCIS) Do you mean me?

SIR FRANCIS

Yes, Donna Lucia, yes! (MOVES D TO R OF CHAIR R OF TABLE) By George, (ASIDE) that's a good start.

LORD FANCOURT

(ASIDE) What am I to say to that, I wonder? (ALOUD) Oh, yes, I think that's very nice and very kind of you.

SIR FRANCIS

(ASIDE) By George, she looks anything between fifty and a hundred--! (JACK, UNSEEN TO SIR FRANCIS, APPEARS UR, PUTS HIS TORSO THROUGH THE FALSE PROSCENIUM'S TORMENTOR, AND SHAKES HIS FIST AT LORD FANCOURT. LORD FANCOURT REPLIES WITH A RUDE GESTURE WHICH, AS SIR FRANCIS TURNS TO HIM, HE CHANGES INTO ADJUSTING HIS HAT. JACK EXITS UR) Well, I've put myself to it, so I must come to the point. (CLEARS THROAT AGAIN)

LORD FANCOURT

What, again?

SIR FRANCIS

(CROSSES TO BELOW TABLE, ALOUD) Donna Lucia, do you know what a man longs for when he's lonely--desolate--wretched?

LORD FANCOURT

(HELPFULLY) A drink?

SIR FRANCIS

(MOVING DR OF HIS POSITION, ASIDE) What a woman--doesn't help one bit! (MOVES BACK, ALOUD) No, Donna Lucia, this is what he longs for--he longs to plant in his own heart that bright little floweret.

LORD FANCOURT

I know--by the wayside-- (POINTING) that one. Does he really?

SIR FRANCIS

(HEARTILY) Yes, Donna Lucia, yes. (WITH LOVER-LIKE INTENTION) And I have come all the way from India to find that little floweret.

LORD FANCOURT

You must be tired. (INDICATES CHAIR R OF TABLE) Take a chair.

SIR FRANCIS

(SITS, PLACING HAT AND WALKING-STICK ON TABLE) Thank you. It's a long way, Donna Lucia.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, quite a long walk.

SIR FRANCIS

But I have found it.

LORD FANCOURT

Then why don't you wear it in your buttonhole? (POINTING)

SIR FRANCIS

Ah, will you let me or will it be given away to another as you did before?

LORD FANCOURT

Ah, yes--I remember, I was a naughty girl this morning. (PUTS HIS HAND ON THE TABLETOP)

SIR FRANCIS

(LOOKING AWAY, CAUTIOUSLY) But, dear Donna Lucia-- (PLACES HIS HAND ON TOP OF LORD FANCOURT'S, AND PATS IT. HE THEN REMOVES HIS HAND, AND LOOKS AWAY AGAIN)

LORD FANCOURT

(TAKING HAND OFF TABLE, ASIDE) He's getting on!

SIR FRANCIS

The floweret I mean must sit at the head of my table--walk by my side--dwell in my heart for ever. (HE IS HOLDING HIS HAT AT ITS POSITION ON THE TABLE WITH BOTH HANDS; HE WITHDRAWS THE RIGHT HAND AND PLACES IT ON HIS HEART)

LORD FANCOURT

(WATCHES THIS, THEN ASIDE) He's going to show me a conjuring trick.

SIR FRANCIS

(BRISKLY NOW) But I'll waste no more words--I'll come to the point with a soldier's bluntness. Will you be my wife? (LORD FANCOURT GASPS) Will you be my little floweret?

LORD FANCOURT

Well, you see-- (THEN REMEMBERS JACK'S WORDS) "you've taken me so much by surprise."

SIR FRANCIS

Then I may hope?

LORD FANCOURT

I'm afraid not. No, don't hope--I wouldn't hope if I were you.

SIR FRANCIS

(RISES) I beg pardon, Donna Lucia. Do I understand--

LORD FANCOURT

I must refuse you. The fact is, I am another's.

SIR FRANCIS

Another's? (TURNS AWAY)

LORD FANCOURT

I say, don't be downhearted--I'll tell you what I'll do if you like.

SIR FRANCIS

(TURNING EAGERLY) Yes, yes.

LORD FANCOURT

I will be a sister to you.

SIR FRANCIS

A sister--only a sister?

LORD FANCOURT

Only a sister. Nothing more.

SIR FRANCIS

And no words of mine can alter your decision?

LORD FANCOURT

I'm afraid not. You see, I'm in a more peculiar position that I could ever explain. I am a woman with a history.

SIR FRANCIS

(CROSSES TO ABOVE TABLE) Then it is quite useless our prolonging this interview. And will you accept my regrets and (PICKS UP HAT AND STICK)
--apologies for ever having broached the subject?

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, certainly! Any time you're passing--

SIR FRANCIS

(PUTS ON HAT--ASIDE) Refused. (MOVES UC TO GATEWAY) What a relief! I'm sorry, though, for the boy's sake. (EXITS UL, BEHIND RAILING, PUTTING ON HIS HAT)

JACK

(ENTERS RC, AND MOVES ABOVE TABLE TO L OF LORD FANCOURT) Well!

LORD FANCOURT

(RISES) Well, here's a nice position! (STEPS BELOW TABLE)

JACK

You fool, what did you want to make a fool of my Dad like that for?

LORD FANCOURT

(RAPIDLY) I didn't make a fool of the fool, you fool! Did you hear what he called me?

JACK

Yes, a floweret.

LORD FANCOURT

Yes, by the wayside. That's a nice thing, isn't it?

JACK

(MOVES TO L OF LORD FANCOURT) Why didn't you cut him short, and refuse him at once?

LORD FANCOURT

I couldn't refuse him until he'd proposed--no lady could. (TAKES A FEW STEPS R) Why, I shall find myself in the divorce court before I know where I am. (LOOKS OFF R; SEES SPETTIGUE APPROACHING) Look out, (CROSSING L OF JACK) here's old Spettigue. (MAKES A FIST, THREATENINGLY) I shall land him one--I know I shall--I'm off! (DASHES OFF DL)

SPETTIGUE

(ENTERS DR) Ah, Mr. Chesney--have you seen-- (NOTICES LORD FANCOURT DISAPPEARING) Ah! (SPETTIGUE RUNS DL AND EXITS AFTER LORD FANCOURT. HIS HURRY KNOCKS JACK INTO A POSITION WHERE HE SITS ON THE TABLETOP)

JACK

What the deuce did he bolt like that for? Anyhow, they don't wreck my future happiness. (RISES) I must find Kitty. Why couldn't Charley's aunt behave like a lady and turn up as she promised--instead of giving us all this trouble. (CROSSES DL) I hate the sight of her before I've even seen her. (EXITS DL)

DONNA LUCIA

(OFF) First door to the right? Thank you very much. (DONNA LUCIA ENTERS UL BEHIND RAILING, AND MOVES IN TO L OF GATE, BELOW IT. SHE IS A WELL-PRESERVED WOMAN OF MIDDLE-AGE, WITH A YOUNG FACE. SHE HAS A KEEN SENSE OF HUMOUR, AND IS CAPABLE OF TAKING COMMAND OF ANY SITUATION. SHE IS ESSENTIALLY GAY, AMUSEMENT DOMINATING HER PERFORMANCE, AND SHE DOMINATING THE SITUATIONS FROM NOW ON. SHE WEARS A LONG DRESS OF BROWNISH-GOLD COLOUR, HAT AND GLOVES, AND CARRIES A HANDBAG. ELA DELAHAY FOLLOWS HER ON AND MOVES TO R OF JACK'S DOOR, UC, TURNING TO DONNA LUCIA. ELA IS A YOUNG, PRETTY, UNAFFECTED GIRL, WHO ALSO HAS A SENSE OF HUMOUR AND AN ABUNDANCE OF HIGH SPIRITS, ALTHOUGH SHE CAN BE SHY AND RESERVED WITH STRANGERS. SHE DISPLAYS A GENUINE ENTHUSIASM FOR THINGS WHICH APPEAL TO HER. SHE WEARS AN ORANGE AND YELLOW COTTON PRINT DRESS, HAT AND GLOVES, AND CARRIES A HANDBAG) The first door to the right, the man said, Ela.

ELA

Yes, here it is. (READS ON DOOR) "Mr. John Chesney." Shall I knock?

DONNA LUCIA

Yes, do, my dear. (ELA KNOCKS) "Chesney." (DONNA LUCIA MOVES DOWNSTAGE, THOUGHTFULLY) The name sounds familiar. (TO ELA) Why couldn't my nephew remain in his rooms, and not compel me to follow him about like this.

ELA

(CROSSING TO R OF DONNA LUCIA) You telegraphed to say you couldn't come.

DONNA LUCIA

(SMILING) I know, my dear.

ELA

And then you changed your mind.

DONNA LUCIA

Yes, for about the first time in my life.

ELA

Why?

DONNA LUCIA

(MOVES TO BELOW TABLE) Some vague desire to see him without his knowing. Knock again, dear.

ELA

(MOVES TO DOOR UC AND KNOCKS) The porter said they might all be in the garden. (CROSSES LC; WITH ENTHUSIASM) I could roam about these old places all day. (MOVES TO UL OF CHAIR L OF TABLE) Isn't it beautiful?

DONNA LUCIA

Dream away, Ela--I shall wait till someone comes. (SITS IN CHAIR R OF TABLE)

ELA

(MOVES DOWN A FEW STEPS, LOOKING AROUND, THRILLED) Oh, to live among these leafy shades, ancient spires, and sculptured nooks-- (CROSSES TO LC) like silent music, a scholar's fairyland.

DONNA LUCIA

(WITH QUIET HUMOUR) But to one poor sublunary being--not quite so young as she used to be--a little fatiguing.

ELA

(CROSSES TO ABOVE TABLE) And how lovely it must be in moonlight, where the shadows have no sudden fears, but are only folds in the mantle of sleep, and all is peace!

DONNA LUCIA

You fanciful little woman. But what has put all this about moonlight and so forth into your head today?

ELA

(CROSSES R OF DONNA LUCIA'S CHAIR) Oh, I don't know.

DONNA LUCIA

(RISES; TEASINGLY) I think I can trace back all the little by-ways and sly ways of thought that generally lead in one direction.

ELA

(QUICKLY) Oh, no, it's all so sweet here--

DONNA LUCIA

(MOVES DL, MISCHIEVOUSLY) So it was there--"by moonlight", seen from the bridge of a certain yacht--"the rippling sea, the blue night, and brilliant stars"--you see how I remember your words--and a certain "someone" who told you, as you listened to the chime of the ship's bell, that you looked like "the angel of the watch"-- He was a flattering-tongued person, that "someone," (MOVES BACK TO CHAIR R OF TABLE, AND SITS) what was his name again?

ELA

(SITS ON THE GROUND, R OF DONNA LUCIA'S CHAIR; SHYLY) I've told you so often.

DONNA LUCIA

(LOOKING STRAIGHT AHEAD, WITH A SMILE) "Lord Fancourt Babberley."
(A PAUSE; TO ELA) But I don't want your mind fixed on these things,
my dear. (CHANGING TONE) Why, I'd almost forgotten to tell you, I've
invested your poor father's money for you, and thanks to his forethought
for his little girl--he has rendered you independent for life, and what
is worse, independent of me.

ELA

(SITS UP) Independent!

DONNA LUCIA

But you won't be, Ela?

ELA

(RELAXES; AFFECTIONATELY) No.

DONNA LUCIA

For I've grown to love the little orphan I met in such grief in a strange
land so much, that I am not independent of her. So let's make a bargain.
Put that dreadful evidence of my dependence aside, and let it grow, and
be my little girl and call me, "Auntie," will you?

ELA

(RISES, AND THEY KISS) Yes, auntie.

DONNA LUCIA

(AFTER A PAUSE) How did your poor father come to have so large a sum of
money by him like that? I thought he'd lost it all.

ELA

(DIFFIDENTLY) Papa won it at cards.

DONNA LUCIA

Won it at cards? When?

ELA

(LOOKING DOWN) During his illness.

DONNA LUCIA

From whom?

ELA

(RELUCTANTLY) From Lord Fancourt Babberley.

DONNA LUCIA

Is Lord Babberley a gambler, too?

ELA

No!

DONNA LUCIA

(SEEING THE POSITION AND SMILING TO HERSELF) Oh! (SLIGHT PAUSE)

ELA

(EAGERLY) But, auntie, if ever we meet, may I give it back?

DONNA LUCIA

(AMUSED) I don't think he'd take it.

ELA

Why not?

DONNA LUCIA

It seems to me he took too much trouble to lose it! (CHANGING TONE) But I'm not going to speak for him. I don't want you ever to leave me.
(PAUSE) Ah, my dear, (LAUGHING QUIETLY) you've set me thinking now.
(SHE RISES)

ELA

Have I, what about?

DONNA LUCIA

(MOVES DL, BELOW CHAIR L OF TABLE) Oh, all about--"someone"--who--(SITS)

ELA

(MOVES BELOW TABLE TO R OF HER, AND KNEELS) Oh, do tell me.

DONNA LUCIA

I was before I went abroad--to Brazil--I was very young and he was very shy. He never called me "the angel of the watch," but he did get as far as a stammering compliment and a blush--and then--

ELA

And then--?

DONNA LUCIA

(WITH A MOCK HEROIC WAVE OF THE HAND) Then he was ordered off with his regiment.

ELA

Without--ever--

DONNA LUCIA

(WITH FINALITY) Without--ever!

ELA

(REGRETFULLY) Oh-- Auntie! (LOOKS UP AT DONNA LUCIA)

DONNA LUCIA

(TINY PAUSE--SOFTLY, REMINISCENTLY) It was at a dance the evening before he went away.

ELA

And you've never loved anyone since!

DONNA LUCIA

(SMILING QUIETLY) I was a sentimental young lady in those days.

ELA

What was his name, auntie?

DONNA LUCIA

Frank Chesney-- (RISES, WITH QUICK GLANCE TOWARDS DOOR. ELA RISES)
How strange! (SIR FRANCIS ENTERS UL, ABOVE RAILING, AND ENTERS THROUGH
THE GATEWAY, UC) I'm afraid we're intruding.

SIR FRANCIS

(MOVING TO UL OF CHAIR L OF TABLE) Not at all. (RAISES HIS HAT) The college grounds are open to everyone. I am, so to speak, at home here, merely because these are my son's rooms. (INDICATES THEM)

DONNA LUCIA

Mr.--?

SIR FRANCIS

Chesney. (DONNA LUCIA GLANCES AT ELA, WHO MOVES QUIETLY UR, TO FALSE PROSCENIUM, TURNS AND WATCHES THE SCENE)

DONNA LUCIA

And you--pardon my asking--are you--or rather, were you--Lieutenant Frank Chesney?

SIR FRANCIS

(INTERESTED) I was.

DONNA LUCIA

And you don't remember me? (MOVES R A FEW STEPS)

SIR FRANCIS

(ELA MOVES D TOWARDS THEM, INTERESTED) I acknowledge with regret that I have--er--no recollection whatever-- (BUT SOUNDS AS THOUGH HE WISHES HE HAD)

DONNA LUCIA

It must be more than twenty years since-- (MOVES UP TO ELA)

SIR FRANCIS

(TRYING TO RECALL) Twenty years!

DONNA LUCIA

(ASIDE TO ELA, WITH MOCK CONCERN) He doesn't remember me! (TAKING OUT SEVERAL CARDS FROM HER BAG AND LOOKING THROUGH THEM)

ELA

(MOVES CLOSER TO HER) Twenty years is a long time, auntie.

SIR FRANCIS

(TO AUDIENCE) Twenty years! Where was the regiment then--I wonder?

DONNA LUCIA

(READS CARD) "Mrs. Beverley-Smythe"-- (ASIDE, TO ELA) Everyone's card but my own, of course. (PUTS BAG AND CARDS ON TABLE) Then (TO SIR FRANCIS) you've forgotten the day you first embarked for India?

SIR FRANCIS

No.

DONNA LUCIA

But you've forgotten--the evening before?

SIR FRANCIS

(WITH A SMILE OF RECOLLECTION) No--not altogether.

DONNA LUCIA

(MOVES D BELOW TABLE, HOLDING OUT HER HAND) Then--?

SIR FRANCIS

(SLOWLY SURPRISED AND DELIGHTED) Lucy! (TAKES OFF HIS HAT, AND MOVES TO L OF HER, TAKING HER HAND) Good gracious! (ELA MOVES R TO FALSE PROSCENIUM, AND TURNING, WATCHES THE SCENE SYMPATHETICALLY) And to think that at that very dance--but you don't remember that of course. (LETS GO HER HAND; PUTS HIS HAT ON AGAIN)

DONNA LUCIA

No? (SITS IN CHAIR R OF TABLE)

SIR FRANCIS

No, because you never knew--but that night, by George, I nearly made you an avowal that-- Ah! (LOOKING AT HER, ADMIRINGLY) And we've never met in all that time!! Nearly-- (SEES HER PRETENDED DISMAY) Well--over twenty years, we'll say, eh?

DONNA LUCIA

(SMILING) I'm afraid so.

SIR FRANCIS

I remember the dance perfectly, you were in white--tied up with blue.

DONNA LUCIA

(LAUGHING) Tied with blue! Like a chocolate box!

SIR FRANCIS

(WITH ENTHUSIASM) You must see my son, he's a splendid fellow! (TURNS AND MOVES TOWARDS DOOR, UC, INDICATING) These are his rooms, or rather, he has lent them to a college friend, a young fellow named Wykeham.

DONNA LUCIA

(INTERESTED) Yes. Wykeham?

SIR FRANCIS

Who is entertaining some ladies--two young ladies (DONNA LUCIA SMILES) --and his aunt.

DONNA LUCIA

(PUZZLED) His aunt?

SIR FRANCIS

A lady from Brazil. (ELA MOVES TO ABOVE TABLE, NEAR DONNA LUCIA)

DONNA LUCIA

(ASTONISHED) From Brazil!

SIR FRANCIS

Yes. Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez. I must introduce you.

ELA

(QUICKLY, ASIDE TO DONNA LUCIA) Auntie, what does he mean?

DONNA LUCIA

(ASIDE, TO ELA) Wait a minute, my dear. (TURNING TO SIR FRANCIS) Do I understand you to say that Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez is here, actually here?

SIR FRANCIS

(MOVING TO L OF CHAIR L OF TABLE) In the garden, (WITH A LOOK OFF, L) or was, five minutes ago. Do you know her?

DONNA LUCIA

I--I've heard of her. (LEANS TOWARDS AUDIENCE) Shall I stay and see this out, or return to town and-- (SHE ABSENTLY FINGERS THE VISITING CARD)

SIR FRANCIS

May I trouble you? (HOLDING OUT HAND FOR CARD)

DONNA LUCIA

(WITH A QUICK LOOK AT SIR FRANCIS--GIVES WRONG CARD) Certainly.

SIR FRANCIS

(MOVES TOWARDS UL, READS) "Mrs. Beverley-Smythe."

ELA

(TO DONNA LUCIA) Auntie!

DONNA LUCIA

Ssh!

SIR FRANCIS

I'll find Donna Lucia, and the boys, or perhaps you wouldn't mind coming into the garden to them?

DONNA LUCIA

(RISES; CROSSES R OF TABLE TO ABOVE IT, L OF ELA) With pleasure. I'm quite curious to see them. (TO SIR FRANCIS, INTRODUCING) My niece, Miss Delahay.

SIR FRANCIS

How do you do? (ELA SMILES)

DONNA LUCIA

Er--Colonel?

SIR FRANCIS

(WITH A SLIGHT BOW) Sir Francis Chesney.

DONNA LUCIA

Come, Ela. (SHE EXITS WITH ELA, UR)

SIR FRANCIS

(REPLACES HAT ON HIS HEAD; MOVES TO ABOVE TABLE, ENTHUSIASTICALLY) Ah, Jack, my boy, if that had been Donna Lucia--things might have been very different. (EXITS UR. LORD FANCOURT RUNS IN, DL, HOLDING SKIRTS UP IN FRONT ONLY, SO THAT SPETTIGUE DOES NOT SEE HIS TROUSERS. SPETTIGUE CHASES HIM IN FROM DL, OUT OF BREATH, TOP HAT WOBBLING. BOTH EXIT DR. BRASSETT HAS ENTERED FROM DOORWAY UC, WITH TABLECLOTH, SEES THEM, DOES A TAKE)

BRASSETT

(MOVES TO R OF TABLE) What's his lordship up to with the old gent now? Looks as if they were having a game of some kind. I think it's very dangerous, running about like that. I'm not sure I didn't catch sight of his lordship's trousers. (REMOVES SALVER FROM TABLE, AND PUTS IT ON BENCH SEAT UC)

JACK

(ENTERS LC, WITH KITTY, AND CROSSES BELOW TABLE WITH HER TO RC, TALKING ARDENTLY) And now here we are at last--no one here, and I can speak to you. Kitty, my dear Kitty-- (BRASSETT MOVES ABOVE TABLE; LAYS CLOTH)

KITTY

(SEES BRASSETT--ASIDE TO JACK) But, Jack, look!

JACK

(MOVES TO R OF BRASSETT) What are you doing, Brasset?

BRASSETT

Laying the cloth for tea, sir.

JACK

Go away!

BRASSETT

But you gave orders, sir.

JACK

Put it back for half an hour. Quick, man, can't you see I'm engaged?

BRASSETT

(LOOKING FROM KITTY TO JACK) Really, sir? I congratulate you. (KITTY SMILES)

JACK

Busy, confound you! Get out and don't come back! (PICKS UP TEA-CLOTH AND DRAPES IT OVER BRASSETT'S HEAD, PUSHING HIM OFF, UC, THROUGH DOORWAY. KITTY TURNS AND MOVES TO L OF CHAIR L OF TABLE. JACK STEPS TOWARDS HER) And now, my dear Kitty--

KITTY

(AMUSED) Yes, Jack, you've said that before.

JACK

Now don't interrupt me. I go straight at most things, and I'm not going to hesitate over this.

KITTY

Is it that you attach so much importance to it, (CROSSES BELOW JACK TO ABOVE TABLE) or that you don't care what you do?

JACK

(MOVES TO R OF KITTY) It's both--mixed--so, Kitty, my dear Kitty--

KITTY

(CHAFFINGLY, LOOKING AT HIM) Yes, Jack?

JACK

Ah, Kitty, do be serious. In a few hours you'll be hundreds of miles away, and it may be years before we meet again--unless--unless--

KITTY

(MISCHIEVOUSLY) Unless--what?

JACK

Will you listen?

KITTY

(MOVES TO ABOVE CHAIR, L OF TABLE) I can't help myself.

JACK

(SERIOUSLY) I've told you how my father intended me for Parliament and all that?

KITTY

Yes.

JACK

Well, he tells me now, that for the next few years I shall have to give all that up, and earn my own living. (CROSSES TO L OF TABLE)

KITTY

Well, that will do you no harm, Jack. (MOVES TO L OF CHAIR L OF TABLE)

JACK

(BRIGHTLY) No, that's how I look at it. (CROSSES TO BELOW TABLE) I've done well up here, I've worked hard, and work tells wherever you are--so I intend to turn to--and come out all right--one way or another. (TURNS TO AUDIENCE) I've broken the ice at last!

KITTY

(ASIDE--QUICKLY) The dear fellow!

JACK

(ASIDE--LOOKING OFF R) I hope they'll keep away.

KITTY

I'm sure I wish you every success.

JACK

Of course--in time--I shall be all right, but the question is, will you wait?

KITTY

Wait? What for?

JACK

(DISCONCERTED) No. (QUICKLY AND NERVOUSLY, CROSSING TO CHAIR R OF TABLE) I beg pardon--I don't mean that.

KITTY

(SITS) Oh, you don't mean it?

JACK

(BRAVELY) No. What I really mean is, that--before I say anything further--I should like you to understand (HIS COURAGE MELTING) --what I've been telling you.

KITTY

(AFTER A PAUSE) Oh, yes-- (CRUELLY) What was that?

JACK

(SITS ON R SIDE OF TABLETOP) Well, to be practical and lay everything fairly before you--my position in life will be something in--er--

KITTY

The City.

JACK

Thanks. My home--er--

KITTY

Suburban.

JACK

Thanks. Exactly! Transit--

KITTY

'Bus or rail.

JACK

My personal income--

KITTY

Small.

JACK

My extra income--

KITTY

Precarious.

JACK

(STANDS) But under certain conditions my fears would be nil--and my hopes tremendous!! Now you know all (SITS) --that's how I stand.

KITTY

(POINTEDLY) Oh, that's how you stand.

JACK

(RISING, LAUGHS) Oh, Kitty! (ASIDE, QUICKLY) It's my duty to tell her all--

KITTY

(ASIDE, QUICKLY) The dear fellow!

JACK

(ASIDE) I'll kill anyone who comes now!

KITTY

(AFFECTING A KINDLY BUT UNCONCERNED INTEREST) Well, I hope those happy conditions will be realised to your heart's content.

JACK

(SWEEPS ABOVE TABLE TO L OF CHAIR L OF TABLE) Kitty, my dear Kitty--they will never be realised--without you.

KITTY

(RISES, AND MOVES A FEW STEPS TO L) Without me?

JACK

(DRAWS BACK APOLOGETICALLY) Now you're vexed with me. You hate the City! You despise the suburbs! You loathe 'buses!!!

KITTY

(TURNING TO HIM) Why should you say that, Jack?

JACK

(IN WONDER) Kitty!

KITTY

As if I hadn't the heart to do what thousands of better girls than I have done.

JACK

(STEPS TOWARDS KITTY, SURPRISED) Kitty!

KITTY

As if I couldn't guess all the happy fun that is to be got out of cooking and mending--and ministering to the wants and happiness of the man who will work and strive for the woman he loves!

JACK

(MOVING CLOSER) Then, Kitty--?

KITTY

(TURNS TO HIM; HOLDS OUT HER ARMS) Try me, Jack, for I love you dearly.

JACK

(TAKING BOTH HER HANDS) You do, Kitty, you do?

KITTY

As much (TURNS AWAY, TEASING AGAIN) --as much as you love me, Jack.

JACK

(EXULTANTLY) Kitty! (GOING TO KISS HER)

KITTY

(FACING JACK, LAUGHINGLY) "My dear Kitty--"

JACK

"My dear Kitty," you're a brick! (PUTS HIS ARMS AROUND KITTY AND KISSES HER; SHE RUNS DL) I've done it! (CROSSES DR) I've done it! (MOVES L TO TABLE) --in spite of the lot of 'em!!!

KITTY

(MOVES R TO JACK, AND SITS ON TABLETOP) Oh, but what about my guardian, Mr. Spettigue? (JACK SITS ON TABLETOP, TOO, R OF KITTY)

JACK

(DECISIVELY) I'll see him at once.

KITTY

(ALARMED) No, that won't do.

JACK

Won't do?

KITTY

No, I must have his consent in writing.

JACK

In writing, why?

KITTY

So that he can't retract. (MOVES DC) You don't know him as well as I do. Now, there's only one person who can get that written consent for us, (MOVES TO JACK) so be a good boy and send her to me at once.

JACK

(RISES) What, Amy--?

KITTY

No, Charley's aunt--Donna Lucia.

JACK

(STAGGERED) Donna Lucia! But, Kitty--

KITTY

(CROSSES LC) Now, don't ask questions, there's a good boy, but send her to me at once while I find Amy. (EXITS DL)

JACK

(CROSSES DL) Where are we now? This can't go on.

CHARLEY

(ENTERS UL, EXCITEDLY, AND MOVES TO ABOVE JACK, CLAPPING HIM ON THE BACK) I've done it, Jack, I've done it!

JACK

Done what?

CHARLEY

I've let the cat out of the bag, and told her everything.

JACK

(GRABS CHARLEY'S SWEATER, AND FORCES HIM A FEW STEPS TOWARDS R) You fool! What for--told her what?

CHARLEY

(SURPRISED) That I love her.

JACK

(RELIEVED, LETTING HIM GO) Oh, is that all?

CHARLEY

(CHANGING TONE) Yes, but Jack, she's gone off to find Donna Lucia to get her uncle's consent. We shall be in the dickens of a mess yet.

JACK

Well, keep cool, man, keep cool. We're all right up to now! We're all right up to now! (LORD FANCOURT, WITHOUT HIS FAN, ENTERS UR, CROSSES D BETWEEN CHARLEY AND JACK, AND MOVES ABOVE L TORMENTOR OF FALSE PROSCENIUM, ONLY PARTIALLY CONCEALED. CHARLEY AND JACK REACT)

SPETTIGUE

(ENTERS UR, RUNNING, TO ABOVE TABLE. SEEING CHARLEY AND JACK, HE TRIES TO LOOK UNCONCERNED, AND STROLLS DL, WITHOUT SEEING LORD FANCOURT, HUMMING, OUT OF TUNE)

"When and how shall I earliest meet her,

What are the words she'll first say to me--"

(EXITS DL, AFTER CROSSING BELOW CHARLEY AND JACK)

CHARLEY

(CHARLEY AND JACK CROSS UP TO LORD FANCOURT, JACK MOVING BEHIND HIM. THEY DRAG HIM DLC, CHARLEY R OF HIM, JACK L) You'll drag us into awful disgrace.

LORD FANCOURT

And a dem'd good job, too! You don't know the things he keeps on saying to me.

JACK

He? Who?

LORD FANCOURT

Why, my mash---old Spettigue.

JACK

(IMPATIENTLY) Well, what does he say?

CHARLEY

Yes, what does he say?

LORD FANCOURT

(LOOKING AT CHARLEY) No, Charley's too young. (CHARLEY CROSSES UR, ABOVE TABLE, IN A HUFF)

JACK

(AFTER LORD FANCOURT WHISPERS IN HIS EAR) Get out, man, that's nothing.

LORD FANCOURT

No, but it's very embarrassing. Look how well I get on with the girls.

JACK

Yes, confound you, too well.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, do I? (KICKS SKIRT OUT OF HIS WAY AS HE TURNS AND FLOUNCES TO R OF TABLE; SITS ON CHAIR R OF TABLE)

CHARLEY

(STEPS TOWARDS JACK, FINISHING BETWEEN TABLE AND CHAIR L OF IT) Jack, I can live this lie no longer.

JACK

(AGGRESSIVELY) Now, don't start that! (MOVES TO CHAIR L OF TABLE) Some lies have got to be lived. (SITS ON ARM OF CHAIR. CHARLEY AND JACK ARE BOTH FACING DL, IGNORING LORD FANCOURT, AS THEY TRY TO FIND A SOLUTION)

CHARLEY

What for?

JACK

(SAVAGELY) To save confessing them, you duffer!

CHARLEY

(DESPAIRINGLY) I wish to goodness you'd bring it all to an end.

LORD FANCOURT

So do I! I want a drink! (CROSSES DR)

JACK

We'd be all right if the donkey would only be reasonable and behave like a lady.

CHARLEY

I know all that, but he can't--he doesn't know how.

JACK

As it is, the selfish idiot's ruining and spoiling everything. (DURING THE FOLLOWING INTERCHANGE, LORD FANCOURT, SULKING, PROCEEDS TO UNDRESS, LETTING HIS SKIRT AND UNDERSKIRT FALL TO THE FLOOR, AND TOSSING THE REST OF HIS CLOTHES ONTO THE CHAIR R OF THE TABLE. CHARLEY AND JACK DO NOT NOTICE THIS)

CHARLEY

I wish we'd asked Freddy Peel now.

JACK

At any rate, Freddy Peel would have stood by us like a man.

CHARLEY

We were fools to trust him.

JACK

The selfish little beast! (LORD FANCOURT COMPLETES UNDESSING BY ALLOWING HIS SKIRT AND UNDERSKIRT TO SLIP TO THE FLOOR. HE IS DRESSED AS IN ONE ENTRANCE IN ACT ONE, WITH LEMON UNDERSHIRT, AND ORANGE TROUSERS)

CHARLEY

When you think of all the misery he's put us to. (LORD FANCOURT LOOKS INJURED)

JACK

I feel so infernally indignant, I could wring his head off.

LORD FANCOURT

(GRINS, HANDS IN POCKETS) Yoo hoo! (DOES A LITTLE SKIPPING DANCE ON THE SPOT)

CHARLEY

(SEES HIM; REACTS) Look--look at him now! (JACK STANDS; REACTS. LORD FANCOURT MOVES BELOW TABLE, AS JACK AND CHARLEY CROSS ABOVE IT, CHARLEY COLLECTING CLOTHING FROM THE STAGE FLOOR, AND JACK THE ITEMS ON THE CHAIR R OF TABLE. THEY CROSS BELOW THE TABLE AFTER HIM, AS HE DISAPPEARS OFF DL. ALL THREE EXECUTE A FIGURE EIGHT CHASE, RE-APPEARING UL, BELOW TABLE TO OFF DR, AND RE-ENTER UR, MOVING ABOVE TABLE. THIS IS STAGGERED APPROPRIATELY. AS LORD FANCOURT ENTERS FOR THE LAST TIME HE MOVES TO ABOVE L TORMENTOR OF FALSE PROSCENIUM, HIDING. AS JACK AND CHARLEY REACH C ON THEIR LAST ENTRANCE, SPETTIGUE ENTERS DL, RUNNING. HE SEES THEM AND STOPS. JACK AND CHARLEY STOP C, CONCEALING THE CLOTHES BEHIND THEIR BACKS) (SEE FIGURE 7)

SPETTIGUE

(BREATHLESSLY) Ah, Mr. Chesney, have you seen Donna Lucia? (JACK AND CHARLEY BOTH POINT OFF R, WITH FULL ARM GESTURES)

JACK

In the garden. (SPETTIGUE EXITS DR, RUNNING, AND HOLDING HIS HAT. JACK AND CHARLEY MOVE UP TO LORD FANCOURT AND BRING HIM DLC, WHERE, DURING THE FOLLOWING LINES, WITH AD LIB WHERE NECESSARY, THEY DRESS HIM QUICKLY. THE COSTUME IS SPECIALLY CONSTRUCTED TO ALLOW FOR THIS. OTHER BUSINESS DURING THE DRESSING INCLUDES SPINNING HIM AROUND, SNAPPING HIS BRACES, AND GENERAL ROUGH HANDLING OF LORD FANCOURT)

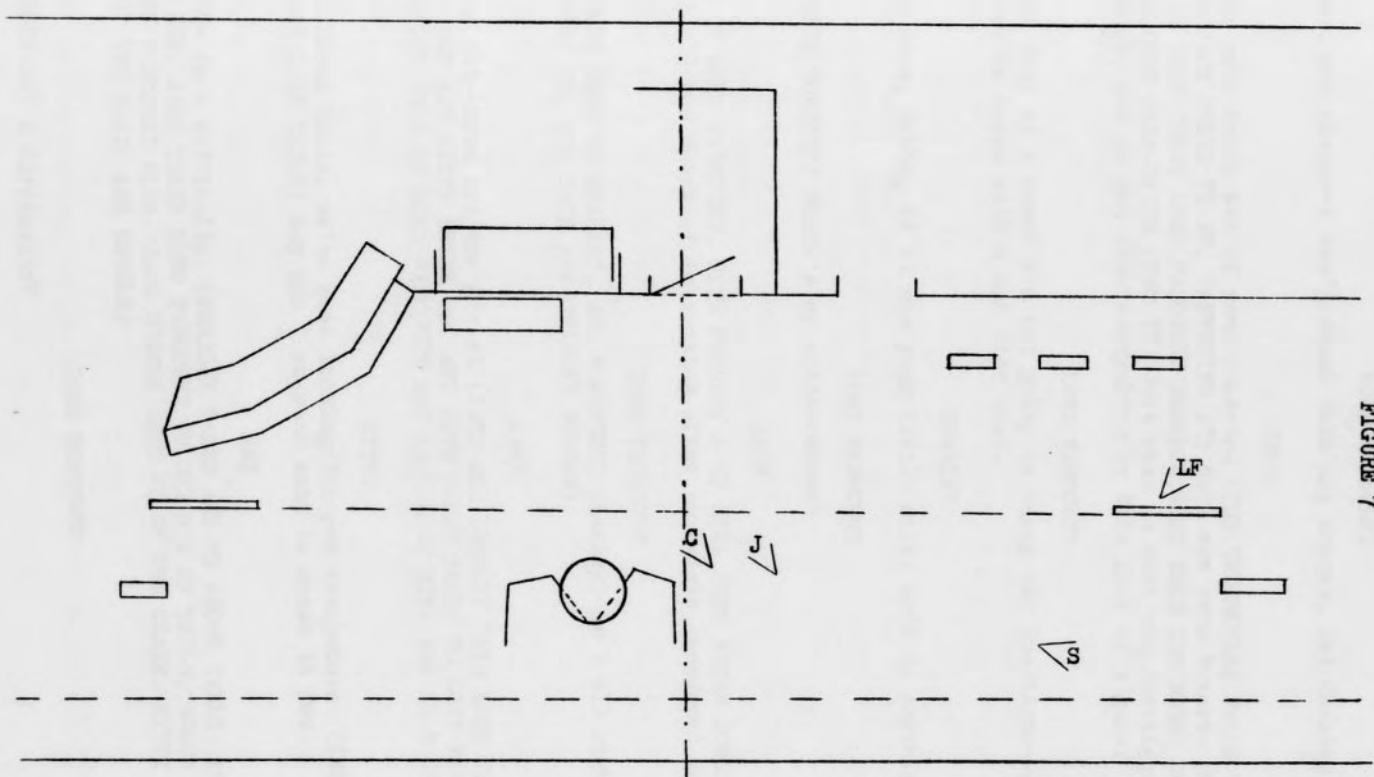


FIGURE 7

CHARLEY'S AUNT: ACT II

SCALE: $3/8" = 1'$

LORD FANCOURT

Here, you chaps--I won't stand this any longer, let Charley have a go.

JACK

Take your hands out of your pockets. (THE UNDERSKIRT FALLS TO THE GROUND AND JACK PULLS IT UP, FASTENING IT) Here are your braces. (CHARLEY AND JACK SNAP THEM; LORD FANCOURT WINCES. **THEY HOLD THE DRESS OUT** AND LORD FANCOURT HALF-DIVES INTO IT) Just when we want old Spettigue in his best humour, you go and risk everything by this fool of a game.

LORD FANCOURT

What fool of a game? I'm not going to marry old Spettigue--I could never be happy with a man like that.

CHARLEY

You know, Babbs, if it was your little girl, we'd do anything for you.

LORD FANCOURT

(STEPS FORWARD) Where's my antimacassar?

JACK

(R OF LORD FANCOURT, WITH CHARLEY L OF HIM; PUTS FICHU ROUND HIS NECK) And all you think of is running after our girls, confound you.

LORD FANCOURT

(TURNS BACK TO CHARLEY, AND FLOUNCES) Charley, am I all right behind? (MOVES DR, AND JACK AND CHARLEY FOLLOW)

JACK

Look out--here are the girls! (JACK AND CHARLEY TAKE LORD FANCOURT TO LC. AMY AND KITTY ENTER RC, AND MOVE BELOW TABLE TO LORD FANCOURT. CHARLEY IS R OF LORD FANCOURT AND JACK L OF HIM; AMY IS R OF KITTY)

KITTY

Oh, Donna Lucia, we've been looking for you everywhere. (INDICATES CHAIR L OF TABLE) Amy and I so much want to speak to you.

AMY

We're in a difficulty. (CHARLEY TAKES AMY TO ABOVE TABLE, AND STANDS R OF HER. JACK TAKES LORD FANCOURT TO CHAIR L OF TABLE, BELOW KITTY, WHERE LORD FANCOURT SITS. JACK STANDS JUST UL OF THE CHAIR. KITTY CROSSES TO L OF THE CHAIR AND KNEELS)

LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSING) A difficulty?

KITTY

And we want you to be an angel-- (TO JACK) Now, Jack, do go away!

AMY

(TO CHARLEY) Yes, Charley, do go away.

LORD FANCOURT

Go away, they want me to be an angel. (JACK AND CHARLEY CROSS TO UL TREES, RELUCTANTLY)

KITTY

You know Amy's uncle, Mr. Spettigue, is my guardian, and under my father's will, gets nearly all my money if I marry without his consent.

AMY

And you know Jack and Kitty are in love with each other, and Jack's lost all his money or something--

KITTY

(GETTING QUICKER) For years and years-- (LORD FANCOURT LOOKS AT EACH OF THEM IN TURN)

AMY

(MORE QUICKLY) And Kitty wants you to--

KITTY

No, wait a moment, Amy dear.

LORD FANCOURT

Yes, wait a moment, Amy dear. (LORD FANCOURT PUTS HIS ARM AROUND AMY; CHARLEY LEANS FORWARD AND STRETCHES OUT TOWARDS HIM, AS IF TO MAKE A DASH TO GRAB LORD FANCOURT. JACK RESTRAINS CHARLEY BY THE TROUSERS) It's her turn now.

AMY

(TO KITTY) Now it's your turn.

LORD FANCOURT

(TO KITTY) Yes, now it's your turn. (PLACES ARM AROUND KITTY, AND JACK LUNGES FORWARD, RESTRAINED IN THE SAME MANNER BY CHARLEY)

KITTY

And Amy and Charley are in love with each other, too. But you don't object, do you? (RISES)

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, no, my dears.

KITTY AND AMY

(TO GETHER) You dear thing! (THEY BOTH BEND AND KISS LORD FANCOURT, THEN MOVE EXCITEDLY TO LC, TALKING. CHARLEY AND JACK MOVE DOWN TO R AND L OF LORD FANCOURT, AND SHAKE HIM UP. AMY AND KITTY RETURN TO R AND L OF LORD FANCOURT)

KITTY

(TO JACK) Now, Jack, do go away.

AMY

(TO CHARLEY) Yes, go away, Charley.

LORD FANCOURT

Yes, go away. (JACK AND CHARLEY RETIRE TO THEIR POSITIONS UL) We three girls want to be alone. (KITTY KNEELS AGAIN)

CHARLEY

(ASIDE, TO JACK) I must end this--I must do something!

JACK

Well, go and look after the tea. (CHARLEY EXITS THROUGH DOORWAY, UC, TO ROOMS. JACK EXITS UR, INSISTING) I must bring them all and stop this.

KITTY

(TO LORD FANCOURT) Now, first--you know where we left off, don't you?

LORD FANCOURT

Yes, you're all in love and want to get married.

KITTY

Well--er--yes.

AMY

And we want uncle's consent.

KITTY

And yours. And we want you to be an angel and do it.

LORD FANCOURT

"An angel and do it?" Do what?

KITTY

(A LITTLE ANXIOUSLY) Why, get Mr. Spettigue's consent.

AMY

For both of us.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, for both of you.

KITTY

Yes, first, you see, you'll give your consent to Charley and Amy, won't you?

LORD FANCOURT

(TO AMY) Oh, yes---nothing could be nicer.

AMY

You are so kind--but I knew it from the first.

LORD FANCOURT

Would you like me to be one of your bridesmaids? (THE GIRLS LOOK AGHAST) No? Some other time.

KITTY

Well, now we want you to get his consent, but mine, being a legal affair --you understand, don't you?

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, yes, your father's will, you mean?

KITTY

(RISES) Yes, his consent must be in writing.

LORD FANCOURT

In writing.

KITTY

And you must get it.

LORD FANCOURT

(BLANDLY) Get it?

KITTY

Yes--you must make him write a letter or something.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, but my dears, I've no influence over him.

AMY

Oh, but you're so clever, and so kind.

KITTY

And so rich.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, yes, and so rich--I remember I gave away half a crown only this morning.

KITTY

At any rate, you must try.

AMY

Oh, dear Donna Lucia, do say you will try.

KITTY

We are going away--

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, my darlings, don't leave me. (PUTS HIS ARMS AROUND THEM)

AMY

Yes, we're going to Scotland.

LORD FANCOURT

Scotland! I know--a beautiful country--where the whiskey comes from.
(MOVEMENT OF SURPRISE BY THE GIRLS; LORD FANCOURT WITHDRAWS HIS ARMS)

KITTY

And you are our only hope.

AMY

Oh, Donna Lucia--have you ever been in love?

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, yes, dozens of times. (THE GIRLS REACT WITH SURPRISE) I mean--
once in love, always in love, you know.

AMY

Then you know what it means to us, don't you?

LORD FANCOURT

I should rather think I did.

KITTY

And you'll get his consent for us, won't you.

LORD FANCOURT

Well, I'll do my best.

AMY

(MOVES ABOVE LORD FANCOURT TO KITTY) You can't say "No" now.

LORD FANCOURT

No--not now.

KITTY

Then we'll find Mr. Spettigue (TAKING AMY'S ARM) and send him to you at once. (KITTY AND AMY EXIT LC)

LORD FANCOURT

(RISES AND CROSSES TO L OF TABLE) Well, here's a deuce of a mess. (BRASSETT ENTERS THROUGH UC DOORWAY) Oh, I say, Brassett-- (BRASSETT STEPS TOWARDS LORD FANCOURT) can you get me a brandy and soda? No! Here's old Spettigue coming! (BRASSETT STEPS UPSTAGE, CLEARING A WAY FOR SPETTIGUE, WHO ENTERS UR, CROSSES ABOVE TABLE TO R OF LORD FANCOURT. THIS TIME HE WEARS A PROPERTY TOP-HAT WITH TIN LINING. BRASSETT STRAIGHTENS CHAIR R OF TABLE, BEFORE EXITING THROUGH DOORWAY UC)

SPETTIGUE

(PLACES TOP-HAT ON TABLE, CROWN DOWN, AS HE MOVES TO LORD FANCOURT) Ah, there you are, dear Donna Lucia. I have been looking for you all the afternoon. I have so much to say to you.

DONNA LUCIA

(ENTERS FROM L, THROUGH UC GATEWAY, AND MOVES TO R OF THEM, L OF CHAIR L OF TABLE) Mr. Spettigue--Mr. Spettigue-- (SPETTIGUE TURNS) Will you introduce me to--

SPETTIGUE

(ASIDE) How annoying! Why couldn't she have kept away? (ALOUD) Oh, certainly! Donna Lucia, Mrs. Buttercup-Smith--Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez. (RETIREES UC TO BENCH SEAT, ABOVE DONNA LUCIA)

LORD FANCOURT

(SHAKES HANDS WITH DONNA LUCIA) How do you do? (ENJOYING HIMSELF AGAIN)
I'm Charley's aunt from Brazil--where the nuts come from.

DONNA LUCIA

(SMILING) How do you do? Do you know I'm most interested in meeting you?

LORD FANCOURT

Really?

DONNA LUCIA

I knew your late husband--intimately! (SPETTIGUE CROSSES TO R TORMENTOR
OF FALSE PROSCENIUM AND SULKS. CHARLEY ENTERS THROUGH DOORWAY UC, AND AS
LORD FANCOURT ATTEMPTS TO BOLT IN THIS DIRECTION, CHARLEY STOPS HIM.
DONNA LUCIA MOVES DL, SMILING)

CHARLEY

(ASIDE) Whatever's the matter, Babbs?

LORD FANCOURT

(IN TERROR, POINTING) She knew my late husband intimately! (ATTEMPTS TO
COMPLETE HIS DASH OFF L, BUT IS STOPPED BY JACK, ENTERING UL)

JACK

Well, how are you getting on? Everything's all right, isn't it?

LORD FANCOURT

No! She knew my late husband intimately! (TRIES TO DASH R, BUT CHARLEY
STOPS HIM AGAIN)

JACK

The deuce! (CHARLEY AND JACK MOVE LORD FANCOURT DLC BETWEEN THEM.
BRASSETT ENTERS UC, FROM ROOMS, WITH TEA THINGS, WHICH HE PLACES ON
THE TABLE. JACK IS HOLDING LORD FANCOURT) Look out! Here's tea.

LORD FANCOURT

Well, what of it? (BRASSETT BRINGS BENCH SEAT TO ABOVE TABLE, THEN MOVES
UPSTAGE, AWAITING FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS. AMY AND KITTY RE-ENTER LC)

JACK

(ASIDE, TO LORD FANCOURT) You must entertain. (FIRMLY BUT PLEASANTLY
MOVES HIM TO ABOVE TABLE, WHERE LORD FANCOURT SITS, WITH JACK STANDING
AT HIS R. ALL MOVE TO THE TEA-TABLE. KITTY SITS IN CHAIR R OF TABLE,
DONNA LUCIA ON THE L. SPETTIGUE MOVES IN TO R OF KITTY, AND CHARLEY
TAKES AMY TO STAND ON LORD FANCOURT'S L, WHILE HE REMAINS AT HER SIDE,
L OF HER. BRASSETT MAKES WAY FOR THEM BY MOVING TO A POSITION UR OF THE
TABLE, R OF SPETTIGUE) Now, Donna Lucia, will you pour out tea?

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, certainly.

SPETTIGUE

(STEPS DOWNSTAGE) What a cruel interruption! We were getting on so nicely.

LORD FANCOURT

Do we all take tea? (LORD FANCOURT STARTS POURING TEA INTO THE CUPS)

DONNA LUCIA

(TO LORD FANCOURT) You haven't been in England long, have you?

JACK

(RAPIDLY, ASIDE TO LORD FANCOURT) Change the subject.

LORD FANCOURT

(TO DONNA LUCIA) Change the subject. (DISTRACTED, HE POURS TEA INTO SPETTIGUE'S HAT, WHICH IS STILL ON THE TABLE)

JACK

(ASIDE, PROMPTING) No. Do you take sugar and cream?

LORD FANCOURT

(TO JACK) No. Do you take sugar and cream?

JACK

(ASIDE TO LORD FANCOURT, LOSING PATIENCE) Ask her if she takes sugar and cream. (NODDING TOWARDS DONNA LUCIA)

LORD FANCOURT

(TO DONNA LUCIA) Ask her if she takes sugar and cream. (JACK CATCHES SIGHT OF TEA IN HAT AND PULLS LORD FANCOURT'S SLEEVE. GENERAL CONSTERNATION FROM ALL EXCEPT SPETTIGUE, WHO DOES NOT NOTICE. LORD FANCOURT REPLACES TEAPOT ON TRAY.)

SPETTIGUE

(STEPS TOWARDS LORD FANCOURT) I--er--I think I should like a little sugar and cream, Donna Lucia. (LORD FANCOURT POURS CREAM INTO HAT, WHILE SMILING AT SPETTIGUE. SPETTIGUE NOTICES HIS HAT, AND PICKS IT UP) My hat, my hat! (DONNA LUCIA, TO HIDE HER AMUSEMENT, RISES AND CROSSES TOWARDS L)

LORD FANCOURT

(PUTS DOWN MILK JUG, LOOKS APOLOGETICALLY CONCERNED, AND TAKES HAT) I beg your pardon. (HE MAKES THREE CIRCULAR MOVEMENTS WITH THE HAT TO MIX THE CONTENTS, OPENS THE LID OF THE TEAPOT, POURS TEA BACK INTO TEAPOT, AND HANDS HAT BACK TO SPETTIGUE, WHO TAKES IT, AGHAST. BRASSETT TAKES HAT FROM SPETTIGUE, AND EXITS WITH IT, UC, TO ROOMS. DURING THE CONFUSION, SIR FRANCIS ENTERS UR, AND MOVES ABOVE TABLE TO DONNA LUCIA. THEN HE TAKES HER BACK TO L OF TABLE, AND STANDS L OF HER)

SPETTIGUE

(RESTRAINING HIMSELF, ASIDE) I must keep her in the humour. I must see her alone. I have it! They must come to dinner. After dinner, that's the time for my purpose. (TURNING TO THEM, ALOUD) Pardon me, but I have a little proposition to make.

LORD FANCOURT

(RISING) Hear, hear! (JACK PUSHES HIM DOWN AGAIN)

SPETTIGUE

And I can't take no for the answer. (BRASSETT ENTERS THROUGH UC DOORWAY, AND MOVES TO UR OF TABLE, AS BEFORE)

BRASSETT

(ANNOUNCING) Mr. Spettigue's carriage. (BRASSETT EXITS UC, TO ROOMS. HARPSICHORD MUSIC, AS FOR THE END OF ACT ONE, STARTS VERY FAINTLY)

SPETTIGUE

Ah, capital, the very thing. Now I want you--all of you--to come and stay and dine at my house.

AMY

Oh, yes, uncle--how nice of you. (GENERAL AD LIB OF FAVOURABLE REMARKS)

SPETTIGUE

(TO LORD FANCOURT) You will return with me in the carriage now, Donna Lucia?

LORD FANCOURT

(RISES) I can't--it's impossible.

SPETTIGUE

I will take no denial. I want you, all of you, to come.

DONNA LUCIA

I have my niece with me, Miss Delahay.

LORD FANCOURT

(LOOKS SCARED) Miss Delahay!

SPETTIGUE

Bring her--delighted!

LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSING TO SPETTIGUE) No, no. I can't, my things--my things-- (ELA ENTERS DR, AND AS LORD FANCOURT PLEADS WITH SPETTIGUE, HE SEES HER. AS HE IS STILL SPEAKING, ELA STARTS TO SPEAK, TOO)

ELA

(LOOKING UP AT THE SOUND OF HIS VOICE, DELIGHTED) That voice-- (MOVING L) It is--it is! (TURNS AND SEES LORD FANCOURT) Oh! (TURNS AWAY DIS-APPOINTED) No! (MUSIC SWELLS. LORD FANCOURT THROWS HIS SKIRT UP TO HIS FACE, IN AN ATTEMPT AT DISGUISE, AND FALLS INTO SPETTIGUE'S ARMS, ASTONISHED AND EMBARRASSED. SPETTIGUE CATCHES HIM AS JACK MAKES A DIVE FOR HIS FEET, PULLING THE SKIRTS DOWN, ATTEMPTING TO HIDE LORD FANCOURT'S TROUSERS. KITTY STANDS, AND ALL REACT WITH EXAGGERATED POSTURES OF ASTONISHMENT, HOLDING THE TABLEAU. SEE FIGURE 8. AFTER A THREE-COUNT, THE LIGHTS FADE QUICKLY, AND THE CURTAIN FALLS. HOUSE LIGHTS UP, AND MUSIC CUTS OFF AT CLIMAX)

FIGURE 8



ACT THREE

"Dinner lubricates business."--Boswell.

HOUSE LIGHTS DIM. WHEN THEY ARE DOWN TO HALF, MUSIC STARTS: SAME PIECE AS FOR THE BEGINNING OF ACT ONE. HOUSE FADE CONTINUES TO BLACKOUT. CURTAIN RISES, AND STAGE LIGHTS COME UP.

TIME: EVENING.

SCENE: DRAWING-ROOM OF SPETTIGUE'S HOUSE. SEE FIGURE 9.

AT RISE: BRASSETT IS DISCOVERED DL AT FIREPLACE, LIGHTING CANDLES. THE MUSIC FADES. HE NOW WEARS A BLACK TAILCOAT OVER HIS OUTFIT.

BRASSETT

(A BURST OF JOVIAL CONVERSATION AND LAUGHTER, OFF L, IN THE DINING-ROOM) There they go! Dinner's pretty well over now, and they'll all be in here pretty soon. Fancy old Spettigue getting me to come here tonight and butler for him. I suppose he's too mean to have a butler of his own. Well, all I can say is, it's simply marvellous the way his lordship's kept it up! He's played the perfect lady something wonderful! (ANOTHER BURST OF TALK AND LAUGHTER; BRASSETT LISTENS) Hullo! What's up now? (THE NOISE SUBSIDES) Anyhow, if the worst comes to the worst, I've got his lordship's dress clothes with me.

LORD FANCOURT

(DRESSED AS BEFORE, HE ENTERS UL, ABOVE SIDE PANEL, AND MOVES D TO R OF OTTOMAN) Brasset, get me a fly, quick; I'm going home. (BRASSETT CROSSES UP TO UL ENTRANCE, BUT JACK AND CHARLEY, NOW WEARING BLUE AND PINK JACKETS RESPECTIVELY, BRUSH PAST HIM. BRASSETT EXITS, AND LORD FANCOURT MOVES DL. CHARLEY AND JACK MOVE TO R AND L OF HIM)

JACK

You've been going along all right, if you'd only paid more attention to old Spettigue. Why did you bolt from the dinner table like that?

CHARLEY

It's awfully dangerous and unkind of you, you know.

JACK

Instead of behaving in a dignified manner as Charley's aunt, here you are going on like some disgraceful old--old--

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, go on--finish it; (MOVES DC, AND CHARLEY AND JACK FOLLOW, FLANKING HIM) "Don't spare me!" You can't say I'm drunk, anyhow--or if I am, it's for the want of it!

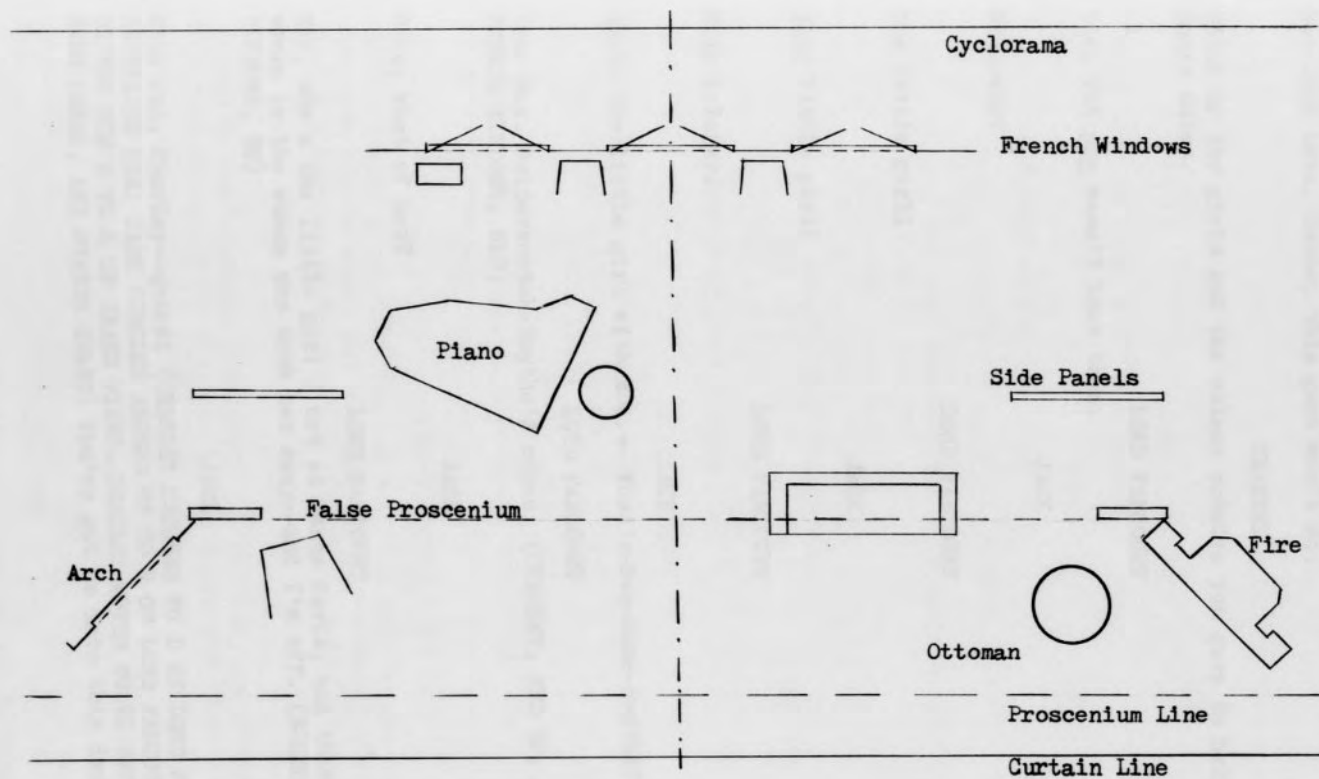


FIGURE 9

CHARLEY'S AUNT: ACT III

SCALE: $3/8" = 1'$

JACK

Now look here, Babbs, this game won't do.

CHARLEY

Think of the girls and the solemn promise you gave to help us, for their sakes.

LORD FANCOURT

Yes, but she wasn't here then.

JACK

She--who?

LORD FANCOURT

The little girl!

JACK

What little girl?

LORD FANCOURT

Miss Delahay.

JACK

What, the little girl with Mrs.-- What's-her-name-Smythe?

LORD FANCOURT

Yes, Mrs. Butterscotch-Smythe's niece. (CHARLEY, FED UP, MOVES TOWARDS FRENCH WINDOWS, ULC)

JACK

Well, what of her?

LORD FANCOURT

Why, she's the little girl I met at Monte Carlo, and this Butterscotch woman is the woman who took her away--and I'm off. (BOLTS FOR FRENCH WINDOWS, UC)

JACK

Stop him, Charley--quick! (CHARLEY CROSSES TO L OF LORD FANCOURT, AND RESTRAINS HIM. JACK CIRCLES AROUND UP TO R OF LORD FANCOURT, AND BRINGS HIM D TO L OF GRAND PIANO. CHARLEY MOVES TO UL ENTRANCE, ABOVE SIDE PANEL, AND STANDS GUARD) You've got us into this deuce of a mess!

LORD FANCOURT

Well, of all the beastly, ungrateful things to say!

JACK

What difference can it make to you now?

LORD FANCOURT

Why, I want to talk to her.

JACK

Talk to her! What about?

LORD FANCOURT

I want to tell her what you have been telling your girls. Hang it! I'm just as much in love as you are.

CHARLEY

(PERTURBED) Jack, they'll hear everything.

JACK

(DISGUSTED) Was there ever such an idiot?

LORD FANCOURT

(LOUDLY) No! There never was! Look at me!!! (MOVES A FEW STEPS UC, AND STARTS CLOWNING) I'm a disgrace to my sex!

JACK

Well, if the worst comes to the worst, we'll take the bull by the horns, and be done with him.

LORD FANCOURT

(MOVING RC, TO L OF JACK) You can take the bull by the tail for all I care, and what's more, you can tell those confounded girls of yours to leave off kissing me before her, (SHOUTING) I won't stand it!

JACK

(SHOUTING) Don't shout, you idiot! (TO CHARLEY) And Charley, we'll make some excuse--say she's ill, put him in a fly and be done with him.

LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSING TO R OF CHARLEY, UL) Charley, you can make some excuse to Miss Verdun for me.

JACK

(JEALOUSLY) Miss Verdun! What have you got to say to Miss Verdun? Come, out with it!

LORD FANCOURT

Haven't I promised to get old Spettigue's consent in writing, you idiot! You're as helpless as a couple of babies, you want your mothers with you! (MAKES A DASH TO WINDOW UR, FINDS IT LOCKED, AND MOVES TO THE UC WINDOW. JACK AND CHARLEY MOVE UC, INTERCEPT HIM BEFORE HE CAN ESCAPE, AND BRING HIM DL, SEATING HIM ON THE OTTOMAN, AND GIVING HIM A GOOD SHAKE. JACK IS R OF LORD FANCOURT, CHARLEY L OF HIM)

BRASSETT

(OFF, UL) This way, madam.

CHARLEY

They're coming! (LORD FANCOURT TRIES TO RISE, BUT JACK AND CHARLEY PUSH HIM DOWN AGAIN)

JACK

Sit down, quick! (BRASSETT ENTERS UL, MOVING TO UC, SHOWING IN DONNA LUCIA AND ELA, NOW DRESSED FOR THE EVENING, WITH MODIFICATIONS TO THEIR PREVIOUS COSTUMES. DONNA LUCIA CARRIES A FAN, ELA SMELLING SALTS. THEY COME IN TO R OF THE SOFA, DONNA LUCIA R OF ELA. LORD FANCOURT RISES, BUT CHARLEY PUSHES HIM DOWN AGAIN. BRASSETT REACTS TO THIS, AND EXITS UR)

DONNA LUCIA

(SITS AT THE R END OF THE SOFA) How is your aunt, Mr. Wykeham? We were afraid she might be ill.

ELA

Yes, is anything the matter? (MOVES ABOVE SOFA, TO C OF IT)

CHARLEY

Er--auntie's been a little upset by the--by the heat of the dining-room, that's all.

DONNA LUCIA

The heat? I found it rather cold!

JACK

Yes, Charley means that--cold. You see, Donna Lucia's lived so long in a warm climate. (DONNA LUCIA TURNS AWAY TO HIDE HER AMUSEMENT BEHIND HER FAN)

ELA

(CROSSING ABOVE SOFA TO JACK) Won't you try auntie's smelling salts? They're so good. (JACK TAKES THEM, AND ELA SITS ON THE L END OF THE SOFA)

JACK

Thank you. She's often like this. Isn't she, Charley? (JACK SHOVES THE BOTTLE UNDER LORD FANCOURT'S NOSE, AND HE SNEEZES VIOLENTLY. JACK HANDS BOTTLE TO CHARLEY WHO PLACES IT ON THE MANTELPIECE. AMY AND KITTY, ALSO DRESSED FOR THE EVENING, ENTER UL, AND MOVE TO C. AMY IS L OF KITTY)

AMY

I hope Donna Lucia is all right?

KITTY

Yes, is she?

ELA

Oh, yes, Mr. Chesney says she is all right now.

KITTY

(MOVING TOWARDS UR WINDOW, SPEAKING TO JACK) Well, go and tell Mr. Spettigue, he's most anxious, and leave her with us.

AMY

(MOVING UP TO L OF KITTY) Yes, we'll look after her now. (JACK AND CHARLEY EXIT UL, AFTER SHAKING FISTS AT LORD FANCOURT IN A WARNING MANNER)

LORD FANCOURT

(MOVING UL OF SOFA, IN A LAST ATTEMPT TO CATCH THEM) I say you fellows, don't leave me like this! (MOVES DOWNSTAGE A FEW STEPS, ASIDE) Here's a deuce of a position! I wonder what they'll talk about? (LOOKING TOWARD THE LADIES) I hope they'll be careful before me! (BRASSETT ENTERS UR WITH COFFEE, CREAM, SUGAR, AND POURS COFFEE FOR KITTY AND AMY)

ELA

(TO DONNA LUCIA) I wonder who she really is, auntie?

DONNA LUCIA

Oh, some old thing they got after receiving my telegram. (BRASSETT CROSSES D TO R OF SOFA, AND OFFERS COFFEE TO DONNA LUCIA. HE POURS IT FOR HER)

ELA

(AS BRASSETT MOVES AROUND ABOVE SOFA) Say something to her, auntie. I like to hear her talk. (BRASSETT CROSSES TO L OF SOFA, OFFERS COFFEE TO ELA, WHO REFUSES IT)

DONNA LUCIA

I would, my dear, but look at her. If I thought they intended that to be like me, I'd never forgive them.

LORD FANCOURT

(ASIDE) Hark at the silly fools! (BRASSETT MOVES TO LORD FANCOURT WITH COFFEE TRAY, R OF OTTOMAN. THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER AND SMILE) I say, Brassett, what's the story? (BRASSETT LOOKS AT THE LADIES, TO SEE THAT THEY ARE NOT LOOKING, AND WHISPERS IN LORD FANCOURT'S EAR. ELA TAKES DONNA LUCIA'S COFFEE CUP, RISES, AND MOVES ABOVE SOFA. AMY AND KITTY HAVE FINISHED THEIR COFFEE AND PLACE THEIR CUPS ON TABLE UR) Oh, that one! (LAUGHS AND REFUSES COFFEE. BRASSETT MOVES L OF SOFA, AND ELA HANDS HIM DONNA LUCIA'S CUP. HE EXITS UL)

DONNA LUCIA

The gentlemen seem to be enjoying themselves. (IN RESPONSE TO A LOUD BURST OF LAUGHTER OFF UL)

KITTY

(MOVING TO UR OF SOFA, NEAR DONNA LUCIA) Yes, they do indeed!

AMY

(MOVING TO RC) Yes, don't they? (SITS ON PIANO STOOL)

DONNA LUCIA

Do you know, I remember a very funny story--

LORD FANCOURT

(ASIDE IN TERROR) That's just what I expected--

DONNA LUCIA

--that Dom Pedro was very fond of telling.

LORD FANCOURT

(ASIDE) I must put a stop to this. (ALoud) Won't one of the young ladies play something, please?

DONNA LUCIA

(TO ELA) How rude of her to interrupt like that!

ELA

Oh, she couldn't have heard you, auntie.

KITTY

Oh, do tell us, Mrs. Beverley-Smythe.

AMY

(RISES, AND CROSSES TO C, R OF KITTY) Yes--anything about Dom Pedro would be so interesting--do tell us.

DONNA LUCIA

But perhaps Donna Lucia would prefer to tell Dom Pedro's story herself?

LORD FANCOURT

Tom Pedro?

DONNA LUCIA

(MISCHIEVOUSLY) Your late husband, you know, Dom Pedro d'Alvadorez.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, yes, of course-- I know his name--but I don't remember his stories. I don't hold with such frivolity. (ASIDE) It's too bad of those fellows.

ELA

(ASIDE TO DONNA LUCIA) Auntie, don't tease her so, tell the story yourself.

DONNA LUCIA

Well, Dom Pedro, who was the kindest soul in all the world, but (TO LORD FANCOURT) --will Donna Lucia give me permission?

KITTY

(MOVING BELOW SOFA TO L OF LORD FANCOURT) Oh, you won't mind Mrs. Beverley-Smythe telling the story, will you?

AMY

(FOLLOWS KITTY TO ABOVE LORD FANCOURT) And you'll listen, won't you?

LORD FANCOURT

(RESIGNEDLY) Well, if I must--I must! (TURNS TOWARDS DONNA LUCIA)

DONNA LUCIA

Well, as I said before, Dom Pedro, who was the kindest soul in all the world, once found one of his cellar-men-- (LORD FANCOURT LOOKS UNEASY) --tipsy--very tipsy.

LORD FANCOURT

Tut, tut!

DONNA LUCIA

So Dom Pedro, whom the man did not recognise--

LORD FANCOURT

Why, was Dom Pedro tipsy?

KITTY

No, no, the man, Donna Lucia.

AMY

The man was tipsy.

DONNA LUCIA

Dom Pedro was, of course, most abstemious--that is what makes the point of the story.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, it does?

DONNA LUCIA

So Dom Pedro said to the man, "What would Dom Pedro say if he saw you like this?"

LORD FANCOURT

"Tipsy"--like this?

KITTY AND AMY

Yes, yes!

LORD FANCOURT

And what did the man say?

DONNA LUCIA

The man said--and that's where it's so funny--

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, is that where we laugh?

KITTY AND AMY

No, no!

DONNA LUCIA

The man said, "Oh, that's all right, Dom Pedro's often like this."

LORD FANCOURT

(BLANKLY) Topsy?

DONNA LUCIA

Yes. (GENERAL LAUGHTER, EXCEPT LORD FANCOURT)

LORD FANCOURT

(ASIDE, SURPRISED) Well, of all the demned silly stories! (KITTY AND AMY MOVE DL. LORD FANCOURT SUDDENLY COLLAPSES WITH LAUGHTER. HE STOPS JUST AS SUDDENLY; TO DONNA LUCIA) What was the man's name?

DONNA LUCIA

Really, I don't know the man's name.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, that's a pity!

DONNA LUCIA

(GETTING HER OWN BACK) But don't you remember the story? It was a favourite one of Dom Pedro's.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, perfectly! I shrieked when I heard it first. I say, that reminds me of a very funny story. I-- (RECOLLECTS HIMSELF) Won't one of the young ladies play something, please?

KITTY

Oh, I'm so out of practice. You sing something, Amy!

AMY

Oh, I can't--I know nothing new.

LORD FANCOURT

Sing that charming little ballad--Ta-Ra-Ra-Boomdeay.

AMY

I'm afraid I can't, Donna Lucia.

DONNA LUCIA

(TO LORD FANCOURT) Won't you sing something for us, Donna Lucia?

LORD FANCOURT

Me?

DONNA LUCIA

Yes, one of those charming little Brazilian songs I've heard Dom Pedro was so fond of.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, no--I haven't sung since I had the measles. (KITTY AND AMY GIGGLE)

DONNA LUCIA

(ASIDE TO ELA) What?

LORD FANCOURT

Over forty years ago.

DONNA LUCIA

(ASIDE TO ELA) Another libel! I was the merest infant.

LORD FANCOURT

(RISES) But I play a little. (ASIDE) That's a good idea! I shan't have to talk, and I can drown their conversation! (LORD FANCOURT, AMY AND KITTY CROSS RC TO PIANO, AMY AND KITTY MOVING ABOVE IT--KITTY L OF AMY --AND LORD FANCOURT STANDING L OF THE PIANO STOOL)

DONNA LUCIA

(TO LORD FANCOURT, AS HE CROSSES) I hope you've quite recovered from the shock my niece gave you today?

LORD FANCOURT

(TURNS TO DONNA LUCIA) Oh yes, I was a little upset, wasn't I? I suffer so much from giddiness. Were you ever giddy?

DONNA LUCIA

(MOCK INDIGNANTLY) Never!

LORD FANCOURT

I was. (SITS ON PIANO STOOL, AND SPINS ROUND ON IT) What shall I play? A little Beethoven, or Blue Bells of Scotland? (LORD FANCOURT PLAYS VARIOUS SCALES, UP AND DOWN THE KEYBOARD, FINISHING WITH A FLOURISH) Do you know that? (HE STARTS TO PLAY SOFTLY, AND AFTER A BAR OR TWO, SPETTIGUE'S VOICE IS HEARD)

SPETTIGUE

(OFF, UL) Come along, my dear friends, come along! (ELA MOVES AROUND AT L OF SOFA AND SITS ON ITS L END)

KITTY

(ASIDE TO LORD FANCOURT AS HE PLAYS) Here they are! Now don't forget the letter!

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, no, I won't forget.

KITTY

(TO AMY) Let's get them all out into the garden and leave her alone with Mr. Spettigue. (ENTER BRASSETT, UL, WHO MOVES UC SHOWING IN SPETTIGUE, SIR FRANCIS, JACK AND CHARLEY. SPETTIGUE PAUSES AT R END OF SOFA, LISTENING TO THE PIANO. DONNA LUCIA RISES, AND CROSSES BELOW THE OTTOMAN, WHERE SHE IS JOINED BY SIR FRANCIS, R OF HER. JACK STANDS BESIDE L TORMENTOR OF FALSE PROSCENIUM, CHARLEY R OF HIM)

SPETTIGUE

(CROSSING TO ABOVE LORD FANCOURT AT THE PIANO) Charming! Charming! (LORD FANCOURT STANDS) Bring the cigars, Brasset, unless the ladies-- (TO DONNA LUCIA) Mrs. Beverley-Smythe, (TO LORD FANCOURT) Donna Lucia, do you object to--

LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSING TO R OF SOFA) Smoking? Oh, no! I like it! (JACK AND CHARLEY GLARE AT HIM, AND HE TURNS BACK TO SPETTIGUE) It kills the insects and things! (SITS AT R END OF SOFA, STARING AT ELA. SPETTIGUE GESTURES TO BRASSETT, WHO EXITS UR)

CHARLEY

Look at him, Jack.

JACK

What's he doing?

CHARLEY

Staring at her like he did all through dinner.

JACK

The fool! (BRASSETT ENTERS UR, AND PLACES TRAY OF CIGARS, CUTTERS, MATCHES ON TABLE UR. HE EXITS UR)

SPETTIGUE

(ASIDE) I must make an opportunity to see her alone. (CROSSING TO C, ALOUD) It's a sweet evening. Perhaps some of you may care to enjoy a cigar in the garden.

JACK

No, thank you, sir.

SPETTIGUE

(ANNOYED) It's a sweet evening.

SIR FRANCIS

You've been enjoying yourselves capitally, Miss Verdun, we heard the music.

KITTY

(MOVING TO PIANO STOOL) Yes, Donna Lucia has been playing for us. (SHE SITS ON THE STOOL. AMY CROSSES TO L OF HER)

SPETTIGUE

(STEPPING TO R OF SOFA) How charming of you, Donna Lucia! (TO CHARLEY) What should we have done without your dear aunt, Charley?

CHARLEY

(IN A HOLLOW TONE) Oh!

JACK

(ASIDE TO CHARLEY) Don't groan like that, you idiot! (CHARLEY CROSSES TO L OF AMY) Are you fond of music, Mr. Spettigue?

SPETTIGUE

(TO LORD FANCOURT, WITH A LOOK) I--I hope to be. (LORD FANCOURT PUTS HIS HAND ON ARM OF SOFA, AND SPETTIGUE COVERS IT WITH HIS OWN)

LORD FANCOURT

(DRAWING HIS HAND AWAY, AND SLAPPING SPETTIGUE'S HAND WITH IT) Why--are you going to take lessons? (SPETTIGUE RETIRES UR, CUTS A CIGAR IN PREPARATION FOR SMOKING. DURING THE FOLLOWING CONVERSATION BETWEEN JACK AND SIR FRANCIS, HE CROSSES TO ABOVE SOFA, AND CONVERSES WITH ELA, AND WHEN HE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY, WITH LORD FANCOURT. LORD FANCOURT SAYS, ASIDE TO JACK) What's he looking at me like that for, like a boiled owl? (KITTY MOVES D TO R OF SOFA, AND TALKS TO LORD FANCOURT)

JACK

(TAKING SIR FRANCIS'S ARM, AND BRINGING HIM UP TO LC) Dad, I'm glad you know about Kitty now, (DONNA LUCIA SITS ON THE OTTOMAN) she's a splendid girl, isn't she?

SIR FRANCIS

I like her very much, I must say, Jack.

JACK

You've taken a load off my mind, Dad. I thought I was quite without means.

SIR FRANCIS

Not altogether, my boy. And you've thought this matter well over?

JACK

Night and day, Dad, ever since I first met her.

SIR FRANCIS

It's a serious step, you know. A serious step. (MOVES D TO L OF DONNA LUCIA)

KITTY

Now, don't forget--in writing. (CROSSES TO AMY AND CHARLEY, AT RC) Amy, let's get them all out into the garden. You take Charley.

JACK

(CROSSING ABOVE THE SOFA; ASIDE TO CHARLEY) I'm glad I told the Dad now. (CHARLEY AND AMY MOVE TO UL FRENCH WINDOWS, CHARLEY L OF AMY. JACK JOINS KITTY AT THE PIANO, WHILE ELA RISES AND MOVES TO L SIDE PANEL, R OF IT)

SPETTIGUE

(TO LORD FANCOURT) But why won't you listen to reason?

LORD FANCOURT

Of course, I'll listen to reason, but where is the letter?

SPETTIGUE

(RECOLLECTING) Ah, I remember, I've not written it yet.

LORD FANCOURT

Not yet!

SPETTIGUE

We must find an opportunity to talk it over, alone!

LORD FANCOURT

That will be nice! (TURNS BACK TO STARE AT ELA. SPETTIGUE MOVES UR TO THE CIGARS, AND PREPARES TO LIGHT THE ONE HE HAS READIED)

AMY

(CROSSING TO UC WINDOWS. CHARLEY FOLLOWS HER) But, Charley, why are you so depressing? We ought to be happy today.

CHARLEY

Amy, great joys sometimes bring a--a sort of reaction; I shall be better--tomorrow! (WITH A LOOK AT LORD FANCOURT)

AMY

Oh, come into the garden! (AMY AND CHARLEY EXIT THROUGH UC FRENCH WINDOWS, AND GO OFF UR. ELA MOVES UC, WATCHES THEM, AND EXITS THROUGH WINDOWS OFF UL)

JACK

(ASIDE TO KITTY) I've told the Dad blank out, and he's delighted! But, Kitty, you won't regret turning your back on "Society" and "The Row" and--?

KITTY

And the stifling hollowness of my own "Monday" and everybody else's "rest-of-the-week" and have something real to think about? Jack, the vista is too heavenly. Come into the garden. (JACK AND KITTY MOVE UC AND EXIT THROUGH THE WINDOWS OFF UR)

SIR FRANCIS

(NOTICING JACK AND KITTY) Shall we join them?

DONNA LUCIA

(STANDS) Yes, it's a charity to leave those two people alone.

SIR FRANCIS

Indeed, why?

DONNA LUCIA

(CROSSING, WITH SIR FRANCIS, TO C) Only a little match-making mischief, that's all.

SIR FRANCIS

On Spettigue's account?

DONNA LUCIA

(SLYLY) No--on Donna Lucia's. (SIR FRANCIS AND DONNA LUCIA EXIT UC, THROUGH FRENCH WINDOWS, AND GO OFF UL. SPETTIGUE MOVES UC, WATCHES THEM OFF. LORD FANCOURT RISES, AND DASHES ABOVE THE PIANO, UNSEEN BY SPETTIGUE, AND HIDES BEHIND IT, UR OF IT. SPETTIGUE PLACES HIS LIGHTED CIGAR ON AN ASHTRAY ON THE PIANO, AND TURNS, CROSSING TO SOFA)

SPETTIGUE

(JOYFULLY) They've gone! (DOESN'T SEE LORD FANCOURT, SO HE MOVES DR TOWARDS DOORWAY) Lucia! They've gone! (LORD FANCOURT MOVES L WITHIN REACH OF THE TREBLE KEYBOARD, AND AN ARM APPEARS STRIKING A HARSH HIGH NOTE. SPETTIGUE TURNS)

LORD FANCOURT

(BOBBING UP FROM BEHIND PIANO) A-ah! (POINTS PLAYFULLY AT SPETTIGUE)

SPETTIGUE

(SEES LORD FANCOURT) Ah, there you are! Lucia, how I have longed for this moment! (MOVES QUICKLY UP TO L OF KEYBOARD TO GRASP LORD FANCOURT)

LORD FANCOURT

(EVADING SPETTIGUE BY SLIDING DOWNSTAGE, WITH HIS BACK TO KEYBOARD, RUNNING A FINGER DOWN THE KEYS FROM TREBLE TO BASE END) Oh, he's at it again! (MOVES R OF KEYBOARD, BELOW PIANO)

SPETTIGUE

(MOVING IN TO L OF BASE END OF KEYBOARD) Lucia, I must speak to you, I--

LORD FANCOURT

No. I am very angry with you. (DRAPES HIMSELF ON THE PIANO, WITH L HAND NEAR KEYBOARD)

SPETTIGUE

Lucia, you wound me; don't say that! (PATS LORD FANCOURT'S HAND, WHO WITHDRAWS HIS HAND AND ~~SMACKS~~ SPETTIGUE'S HAND)

LORD FANCOURT

(MOVING TO C) But I do say that--after the promise you made me, to treat me like this!

SPETTIGUE

Promise?

LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSES TO ABOVE PIANO) The consent you promised in writing. (HE HAS HIS BACK TO SPETTIGUE)

SPETTIGUE

(MOVES UP TO TREBLE END OF KEYBOARD) Lucia, how can you, when we have so much to say that more nearly concerns ourselves. (LEANS OVER THE KEYBOARD)

LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSES TO R OF PIANO) No, we have not. (SPETTIGUE STARTS CLIMBING ONTO PIANO STOOL TO REACH LORD FANCOURT) You don't know me! I'm no ordinary woman.

SPETTIGUE

(STANDING ON PIANO STOOL, DECLAIMING) Lucia, I beg of you to listen to me!

LORD FANCOURT

(NIPS BELOW PIANO, AND KNEELS AT L OF STOOL) I'll listen to you with pleasure, but where is the letter you promised me? (STARTS SPINNING THE STOOL ON WHICH SPETTIGUE IS STANDING)

SPETTIGUE

(STRUGGLING TO KEEP HIS BALANCE) Will you hear me, Lucia?

LORD FANCOURT

(TURNING SPETTIGUE) I'll hear you with pleasure, but why won't you give me the letter? (SEE FIGURE 10)

SPETTIGUE

(COLLAPSES OFF STOOL, AT L OF IT, EXHAUSTED) Lucia, do I deserve this?

LORD FANCOURT

(STANDS, AT R OF BASE END OF KEYBOARD) He deserves six months, the old idiot!

SPETTIGUE

Lucia, you are a puzzle, an enigma!

LORD FANCOURT

How dare you! Until you give me the letter, all is over between us.

SPETTIGUE

Lucia, that decides me. (CROSSES DR, R OF LORD FANCOURT) I go to my room, (CASUALLY) a brief note--

LORD FANCOURT

(POINTEDLY) Will full consent and signed, don't forget.

SPETTIGUE

Then say you will be mine?

LORD FANCOURT

I'll say anything you like, only don't be too long in the study.

SPETTIGUE

(CROSSES TO ARCHWAY DR, AND TURNS) Darling! (BLOWS A KISS; EXITS DR)

FIGURE 10



LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSES DC) That's all right! (WITH AMUSEMENT, FACING AUDIENCE) I say, what devils we women are! It's too bad of those fellows! Why, I shall be an old woman for the rest of my life. I haven't had a drink or a smoke all day. (LOOKS AROUND, AND MOVES UP TO L OF PIANO) By George, here's a find! (SEES SPETTIGUE'S STILL-LIGHTED CIGAR ON PIANO ASHTRAY) I wonder how long he'll be! Hanged if I don't chance it! (PICKS UP THE CIGAR, AND MOVES ABOVE SOFA TO L OF IT, PUFFING VIGOROUSLY) Beautiful! Beautiful! (KEEPS PUFFING)

DONNA LUCIA

(ENTERS UC FROM OFF UL, WITH ELA. SEES LORD FANCOURT, AND ASIDE TO ELA) She's smoking! (ALoud) Ahem! (DONNA LUCIA MOVES D TO R OF SOFA, ELA TO C. LORD FANCOURT, STARTLED, DRAWS IN A LARGE MOUTHFUL OF SMOKE, PUTS LIGHTED CIGAR BEHIND HIS BACK, EXHALES, AND ATTEMPTS TO BLOW SMOKE AWAY WITH THE FAN HE HAS IN HIS OTHER HAND)

ELA

Auntie, do you find it chilly?

DONNA LUCIA

Yes, my dear, I thought I'd get a wrap of some kind.

ELA

I'll go upstairs and get you something. I know where your things are! (EXITS QUICKLY, VIA DR ARCHWAY)

DONNA LUCIA

Are you alone?

LORD FANCOURT

Yes, I'm all alone--and so sad.

DONNA LUCIA

Dear me, (SNIFFING) what a dreadful smell of smoke! (SECRETLY MUCH AMUSED)

LORD FANCOURT

(CHANGING HANDS TO CONCEAL THE CIGAR, AND MOVING RAPIDLY TO RC) Yes, I noticed it myself. I'll go and find out who it is.

DONNA LUCIA

No, don't go. (LORD FANCOURT TURNS, NOW HOLDING CIGAR BEHIND HIS BACK AGAIN) I wanted to talk to you.

LORD FANCOURT

(AIMIABLY) Yes.

DONNA LUCIA

About your late husband, Dom Pedro.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, that will be nice.

DONNA LUCIA

Do you know, when I met Dom Pedro, he told me he had no wife.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, the wicked story-teller. Ah, but he was a cruel husband.

DONNA LUCIA

The Dom Pedro I knew was noble, kind and gentle.

LORD FANCOURT

That was his father, the old gentleman with the white moustache.

DONNA LUCIA

(ASIDE, BEHIND HER FAN) I never knew such effrontery! (ALOUD) Do you know, Donna Lucia, I'm surprised you don't indulge in the habit of smoking--so many Brazilian ladies do, you know.

LORD FANCOURT

Well, to tell you the truth, that's what I was doing when you came in.
(SHOWS CIGAR)

DONNA LUCIA

Then, pray don't let me interrupt you. (LORD FANCOURT SMOKES. ASIDE)
I shouldn't have been surprised at a pipe!

LORD FANCOURT

Can I offer you one?

DONNA LUCIA

No, thanks. (THEY JOIN ARMS AND MOVE DR) You see, not being a Brazilian lady, it might be thought strange. (LETS GO HIS ARM)

LORD FANCOURT

(HOPEFULLY) Will you have a drink of any kind?

DONNA LUCIA

No thanks. Oh, Donna Lucia, pardon my curiosity, but--have you any children?

LORD FANCOURT

(CAUGHT OFF GUARD) Only a few-- (CROSSES TO PIANO AND EXTINGUISHES HIS CIGAR) none to speak of. (DONNA LUCIA CROSSES TO C)

ELA

(ENTERS DR, WITH WRAP, AND MOVES SWIFTLY TO DONNA LUCIA) Here's your wrap, auntie. (PUTS IT ON DONNA LUCIA'S SHOULDERS; STANDS L OF HER)

DONNA LUCIA

Thank you, dear-- (MOVES TO FRENCH WINDOWS, UC) I am going into the garden. I fancy Sir Francis has something to say to me. (ELA CROSSES DL, L OF OTTOMAN) And as it's rather chilly, perhaps you'd better stay in! (DONNA LUCIA EXITS UC TO OFF UL)

ELA

Auntie said we weren't to hint about our knowing she's not--auntie! I'm sure she's only doing it to oblige them. (LORD FANCOURT CROSSES TOWARDS UC WINDOWS; ELA TURNS AND SEES HIM. SHE CROSSES TO L OF SOFA) Oh, don't go--please.

LORD FANCOURT

(TURNS) I was going into the garden.

ELA

It has turned quite chilly. Auntie sent me in from the garden because of that.

LORD FANCOURT

(MOVES D TO C) Can I get you a wrap of any kind?

ELA

(CROSSES R TO BELOW SOFA) No, thank you, auntie thinks I'm better here. I've been ill, you know.

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, but I didn't know.

ELA

Oh, I'm all right now, of course, if I take care.

LORD FANCOURT

(SERIOUSLY) Yes, you must take great care.

ELA

(CROSSES C, AND BRINGS LORD FANCOURT TO SIT AT R END OF SOFA) Auntie, I fancy, is more particular than usual this evening-- (MOVES TO L END OF SOFA, AND SITS ON ITS ARM) For, you know--years ago, she and Sir Francis were--sweethearts.

LORD FANCOURT

Were they?

ELA

But he went away--without telling her he was ever and ever so fond of her. Auntie says he was--shy, and he went away without knowing that she was ever and ever so fond of him. But the noblest man I ever knew was shy, and oh, so kind! (WITH A LOOK AROUND) He had got to know how Papa had become so ill--and so poor--and lost a large sum of money to him at cards, auntie thinks, on purpose. I often wondered why they played cards, and Papa so ill too, but when I asked the doctor if it wasn't doing harm, he said, "Not the game that was being played." (A SHORT PAUSE) But I've got all the money and if we ever meet, I mean to give it back.

LORD FANCOURT

(QUIETLY) Oh, no, you must never think of doing that. It would be like accusing him of a sort of cheating, you know.

ELA

But it was so much--enough, auntie says, to make me independent for life.

LORD FANCOURT

And do you think he'd take it back if he knew that?

ELA

(SIMPLY) Oh, but I should feel it my duty--

LORD FANCOURT

(SMILING) It's too late now.

ELA

But he went away before I had time to tell him how much I--I loved him for (SHE RISES) --for his kindness to my poor father. (CROSSES BELOW SOFA, R OF LORD FANCOURT; TURNS TO HIM) You don't mind my telling you all this, do you? I don't know why, but I like to talk to you. (TOUCHES HIS HAND) I like you, and I do so long to see him again. (EXITS QUICKLY VIA ARCHWAY DR)

LORD FANCOURT

A-ah! (HE SIGHS, STANDS AND WATCHES HER OFF. THEN HE CROSSES DL TO OTTOMAN, AND KICKS IT. SPETTIGUE ENTERS DR, WITH LETTER)

SPETTIGUE

Lucia! (CROSSES TO DC)

LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSES TO L OF SPETTIGUE, DC) Have you got the letter?

SPETTIGUE

(HOLDS THE LETTER UP) Yes, here is the letter. (LORD FANCOURT TRIES TO SNATCH IT, BUT SPETTIGUE ADROITLY MOVES IT BEHIND HIS BACK, AND ASSERTS HIMSELF) But first, make my happiness complete. Say that from this blissful moment we are engaged?

LORD FANCOURT

(CROSSES TO R OF SPETTIGUE, WHO IS HOLDING THE LETTER IN HIS R HAND) We are engaged. (SNATCHES LETTER) Got it--we are engaged. (LORD FANCOURT CROSSES DR WITH LETTER)

SPETTIGUE

Darling!

LORD FANCOURT

(TURNING) Mr. Spettigue!

SPETTIGUE

Call me Stephen.

LORD FANCOURT

(READING LETTER) Is this the letter--Stephen?

SPETTIGUE

Yes, that is the letter, and we are betrothed?

LORD FANCOURT

We are betrothed, darling! (EXITS THROUGH ARCHWAY DR)

SPETTIGUE

(NOTICES DONNA LUCIA AND SIR FRANCIS ENTER UC FROM OFF UL) Ah, Mrs. Beverley-Smythe, (DONNA LUCIA IS UR OF SOFA, SPETTIGUE R OF HER) Sir Francis, (SIR FRANCIS HAS CROSSED D TO L OF SOFA) congratulate me, congratulate me! (SIR FRANCIS LOOKS PUZZLED)

DONNA LUCIA

(CROSSING TO BELOW SOFA; ASIDE) I knew it.

SPETTIGUE

I'm the happiest man in the world--but where are the dear children? This must be a day of happiness and rejoicing for us all, (MOVES UC) for us all! (EXITS THROUGH FRENCH WINDOWS UC, TO OFF UR)

SIR FRANCIS

(MOVING BELOW SOFA TOWARDS DONNA LUCIA) What on earth does he mean? What's all this excitement about?

DONNA LUCIA

(SITS AT R END OF SOFA) Can't you guess?

SIR FRANCIS

No. (SITS ON SOFA)

DONNA LUCIA

Didn't I tell you what would happen if we left them alone?

SIR FRANCIS

Eh?

DONNA LUCIA

Don't you understand? She's actually accepted him.

SIR FRANCIS

What?

DONNA LUCIA

(DRYLY) Yes, Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez!

SIR FRANCIS

You don't mean that? (RISES)

DONNA LUCIA

I fancy he'll find out his mistake before long.

SIR FRANCIS

(TAKES A STEP DOWNSTAGE; HALF ASIDE) By George, what a fool I've been!

DONNA LUCIA

Why? Are you sorry?

SIR FRANCIS

(TURNS TO HER) No, but--that rascal of a boy of mine made some sort of a stupid suggestion that I should--

DONNA LUCIA

That you should offer your hand and heart to Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez--from Brazil, where the nuts come from.

SIR FRANCIS

When I think of what a fool I was--might have been--should have been--

DONNA LUCIA

Then you don't envy him?

SIR FRANCIS

(STEPS TOWARDS HER) Envy him!

DONNA LUCIA

But think of her millions!

SIR FRANCIS

Ah, Lucy, when I saw your face--

DONNA LUCIA

You didn't recognise it!

SIR FRANCIS

(MOVES TO HER) No, but when I did--but I told you all that in the garden just now--and you'll be content for a while with a cottage and your old sweetheart?

DONNA LUCIA

And you? (STANDS) You would take me, a penniless widow?

SIR FRANCIS

Nothing could make me happier!

DONNA LUCIA

(GIVES HIM HER HAND) Frank!

SIR FRANCIS

(TAKING HER HAND) Lucy! (A PAUSE. DONNA LUCIA SMILES) Why, what are you smiling at?

DONNA LUCIA

I was only thinking of--

SIR FRANCIS

Of what?

DONNA LUCIA

Of Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez. (ELA ENTERS DR, AND CROSSES TO R OF SOFA)

SIR FRANCIS

(MOVING DL TOWARDS OTTOMAN) Well, she's a quaint figure, I must own!

ELA

Auntie, did you find the air chilly?

DONNA LUCIA

(SMILES) I didn't notice, my love.

ELA

(LAUGHING) Auntie, how pretty you look tonight! (GLANCES AT SIR FRANCIS AND WHISPERS) Has Sir Francis--?

DONNA LUCIA

Ssh! (SHE SITS ON R END OF SOFA, SIR FRANCIS SITS ON THE OTTOMAN, AND ELA MOVES ABOVE SOFA)

SPETTIGUE

(OFF, UR, ABOVE FRENCH WINDOWS) Come along, my dear children-- come along! (SPETTIGUE ENTERS UC, FOLLOWED BY JACK AND KITTY, CHARLEY AND AMY) Kitty, (SPETTIGUE CROSSES RC) you sit there, (KITTY AND JACK MOVE TO THE PIANO STOOL INDICATED, AND STAND, JACK R OF KITTY) Amy there. (SPETTIGUE INDICATES CHAIR DR, MOVING BELOW PIANO) I have something to tell you. (SPETTIGUE CROSSES TO C, AS AMY AND CHARLEY MOVE TO BELOW PIANO, CHARLEY L OF AMY) Something you will all be very pleased to hear. (BRASSETT ENTERS TO BELOW TABLE UR, FROM UR ENTRANCE) But where is Donna Lucia? (EVERYONE LOOKS, BUT NO ANSWER; BRASSETT STEPS FORWARD)

BRASSETT

(INDICATING DR ARCHWAY) Donna Lucia's gone to her room, I fancy! (STEPS BACK AGAIN)

SPETTIGUE

Ah, perhaps it's just as well! Now, before she returns, I have a little secret to tell you. (ALL EXCHANGE GLANCES, AND VOICE THEIR SURPRISE AND ANTICIPATION)

SPETTIGUE

(TOPS THEM) I am sure you will pardon me if I ask your attention for a few moments.

CHARLEY

(ASIDE TO JACK, ACROSS PIANO) Good gracious, Jack, what's he going to say?

JACK

(ASIDE TO CHARLEY, QUICKLY) How do I know till he's said it?

SPETTIGUE

Situated as I am, a lonely widower, a mateless uncle--surrounded by grave responsibilities--my ward--my niece--a good fairy has, I may say, tripped in among us, bringing with her unexpected light and joy!

CHARLEY

(ASIDE TO JACK) Who does he mean?

JACK

(ASIDE TO CHARLEY) Shut up!

SPETTIGUE

Under her influence, I have consented to the engagement of my niece to a gentleman in whose honour and probity I have the fullest confidence--Mr. Charles Wykeham. (AMY REACTS, TAKES CHARLEY'S HANDS; THEY GRIN AT EACH OTHER. BRASSETT SEES A CELEBRATION IMMINENT, PICKS UP TRAY WITH CIGARS, AND MOVES TO UC, HOLDING TRAY)

AMY

Charley, how sweet of your dear aunt.

SPETTIGUE

Furthermore, charmed by irresistible spells, I have consented to the union of my ward (KITTY REACTS) with John, only son of my friend, Sir Francis Chesney. (KITTY TAKES JACK'S HANDS; THEY GRIN AT EACH OTHER. SIR FRANCIS BEAMS. SPETTIGUE TURNS TO SIR FRANCIS) Ah! Sir Francis! (INDICATES HIS CARNATION; SIR FRANCIS JUST LAUGHS) But what will you say to a third engagement? (SIR FRANCIS RISES AND STEPS TOWARDS SOFA; GENERAL SURPRISE) Our good fairy--nay, let me add without further metaphor--one whose name is honoured in the South-Western hemisphere as that of Rothschild is in Europe (SELF-CONSCIOUSLY AND RATHER SMUGLY) --has consented to become Mrs. Stephen Spettigue. (HE ADDRESSES DONNA LUCIA AND SIR FRANCIS) I allude to our dear friend, Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez. (SEE FIGURE 11; BRASSETT DROPS TRAY OF CIGARS AND THERE IS GENERAL CONSTERNATION. AMY AND CHARLEY MOVE R, JACK AND KITTY MOVE R



FIGURE 11

TO BELOW PIANO, DONNA LUCIA RISES AND MOVES L TO SIR FRANCIS, AND THEY BOTH MOVE DL TO OTTOMAN. ELA FOLLOWS THEM DL TO BELOW SOFA) What is that?

BRASSETT

(HELPLESSLY) Beg pardon, sir--the tray, sir.

SPETTIGUE

(SHOUTING) Be more careful, Brassett-- (BRASSETT STARTS TO PICK UP THE TRAY AND CIGARS, ETC.)

AMY

(CONCILIATINGLY) Uncle!

SPETTIGUE

(MORE QUIETLY) Be more careful. (RESUMING HIS SPEECH) Nothing could please me more than-- (MOVING DC)

CHARLEY

(CROSSING TO R OF SPETTIGUE, WILDLY) Mr. Spettigue, I can listen to this ghastly farrago no longer. (KITTY AND JACK CROSS DR TO AMY)

SPETTIGUE

Mr. Wykeham, sir--what do you mean?

CHARLEY

I say, sir--and I don't care what the result may be--I can listen to this ghastly--

SPETTIGUE

(LOFTILY) I presume, sir, in espousing my niece--

CHARLEY

I can't-- I won't espouse her-- (GENERAL CONSTERNATION) --under these false and lying pretences! (DONNA LUCIA SMILES) That woman--

SPETTIGUE

Do you allude in such a manner to--

CHARLEY

I say that woman--

SPETTIGUE

I must beg of you to speak with more respect of your aunt.

CHARLEY

She is not my aunt! (BRASSETT CROSSES ABOVE THEM TO ARCHWAY, DR)

SPETTIGUE

Not your aunt! What do you mean?

CHARLEY

I love Amy far too sincerely to--

SPETTIGUE

(EXCITEDLY) Never mind, sir; explain your words!

JACK

(MOVING D TO R OF SPETTIGUE) Mr. Spettigue--will you allow me to say that the blame is mine--and let me explain?

SPETTIGUE

I am addressing this person. (TO CHARLEY) Answer me, sir, explain your words.

BRASSETT

(ASIDE) I must tell his lordship of this! (EXITS DR)

CHARLEY

At the last moment, this morning, my aunt--on whose account we had invited Miss Verdun and Miss Spettigue--telegraphed to say she couldn't come. The ladies arrived and we--

JACK

(HELPING OUT) And I, sir, prevailed upon another person, to--well--

SPETTIGUE

To personate her. (CROSSES L TO BELOW R END OF SOFA) I've been treacherously, infamously deceived!

CHARLEY

(CROSSES BELOW JACK TO R OF SPETTIGUE) That was not our intention, sir!

SPETTIGUE

Don't lie to me, sir. (CHARLEY CROSSES ABOVE JACK, TO GIRLS R)

JACK

(CROSSING TO R OF SPETTIGUE) I beg your pardon, sir, you forget you were not expected.

SPETTIGUE

A frump like that, with a hat!

JACK

Well, you can't blame her for that.

LORD FANCOURT

(OFF, DR, IN FALSETTO) May I come in? (JACK AND CHARLEY EXCHANGE LOOKS)

SPETTIGUE

(SAVAGELY) Turn that woman out of my house!

LORD FANCOURT

(ENTERS DR, CROSSING TO DC. LORD FANCOURT WEARS HIS ACT ONE OUTFIT, WITH THE ADDITION OF A LEMON-COLOURED JACKET, WHICH OUTFITS HIM IN THE SAME "EVENING DRESS" STYLE AS JACK AND CHARLEY. IN FALSETTO) I say, may I come in?

SPETTIGUE

(WITH HIS BACK TO LORD FANCOURT) Turn that woman out of-- (TURNING, SEES LORD FANCOURT--BREATHELESSLY) Who are you, sir?

LORD FANCOURT

(IN FALSETTO) I'm Charley's aunt from Brazil--where the nuts come from!

JACK

Fancourt Babberley!-- (MOVES TO L OF LORD FANCOURT) --you duffer--

LORD FANCOURT

(IN HIS OWN VOICE) Fancourt Babberley, I beg your pardon.

ELA

(ASIDE TO DONNA LUCIA) Auntie! And I told him everything!

SPETTIGUE

(STILL FURIOUS) What does this mean, sir?

LORD FANCOURT

(TO SPETTIGUE) It means that we've all done very wrong and we're all extremely sorry, and tender you our humblest apologies--my apologies, I should say, for if I hadn't offered the temptation, the whole thing would never have occurred.

CHARLEY

And if Mr. Spettigue will allow us to add our apologies--

JACK

And say we have no words to express our contrition--

SPETTIGUE

(RAGING) It's infamous, infamous! But where is the document obtained from me under these fraudulent pretences?

LORD FANCOURT

Oh, the letter, I have the letter! (PRODUCES IT FROM HIS INSIDE BREAST POCKET)

KITTY

(CROSSING TO LORD FANCOURT) It's mine, mine!

SPETTIGUE

(TO LORD FANCOURT) Give it to me. (SEEING KITTY'S ANXIETY) Miss Verdun!
(TO LORD FANCOURT) Sir. I demand it! (DONNA LUCIA CROSSES BELOW SPETTIGUE TO DC, AND KITTY RETIRES TO L OF JACK)

DONNA LUCIA

(TAKING THE LETTER) Allow me.

SPETTIGUE

I shall dispute it--under her father's will. I shall dispute it.

DONNA LUCIA

This letter is addressed, and has been delivered to Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

SPETTIGUE

But she-- (LOOKING AT LORD FANCOURT; CATCHES HIS EYE) --I mean he--is not Donna Lucia d'Alvadorez.

DONNA LUCIA

No--but I am! (GENERAL EXPRESSION OF SURPRISE AND CONSTERNATION)

CHARLEY

(TINY PAUSE--QUICK GASP) My aunt!

SPETTIGUE

You will pardon me if I retire. (CROSSES DR TOWARDS ARCHWAY) As for you, sir, I shall enquire from the authorities, your college--in the morning.
(EXITS VIA ARCHWAY DR)

LORD FANCOURT

(MOVES TO CHARLEY, AND BRINGS HIM DC, R OF HIM) I say, Charley, can he have me up for breach of promise?

AMY

(CROSSES TO R OF CHARLEY) Charley, (STAMPING FOOT) Mr. Wykeham! I mean-- how dare you! I'll never forgive you! I'll never forgive any of you, for treating uncle Stephen like that! (CROSSES TO ABOVE SOFA; CHARLEY FOLLOWS TO R OF HER)

DONNA LUCIA

Be patient with us, my dear. Your uncle shall have the most profound reparation my influence can make. For my own part (TO SIR FRANCIS) I only shared in the deception when I found (TO LORD FANCOURT) another lady established in my place.

LORD FANCOURT

(TO JACK; MOVING UP TO R OF HIM) No wonder she knew all about my late husband.

KITTY

Well, I'm as sorry as anyone, but I'd trust Jack with my life.

DONNA LUCIA

Indeed? Then he must wait till I'm his mother.

JACK

(TO DONNA LUCIA) Mother?

SIR FRANCIS

Yes, Donna Lucia, in deceiving me as much as anybody, has, however done me (DONNA LUCIA CROSSES TO R OF SIR FRANCIS) the honour to recollect an old affection, and has promised to assume that authority--so look out, Jack! (JACK SMILES AT KITTY; THEY CROSS DR, L OF ARMCHAIR)

DONNA LUCIA

Lord Fancourt Babberley-- (LORD FANCOURT CROSSES TO R OF DONNA LUCIA) I am afraid you have gained a confidence that nothing could excuse.

LORD FANCOURT

I know, and I reproach myself beyond expression (LOOKS AT ELA), but I wouldn't part with the memory of that confidence to save my life, (MOVING TO R OF ELA, BELOW SOFA) and if Miss Delahay will allow me to say so, I am willing to atone for it, with a life-long devotion. (HE TAKES ELA'S HAND, AFTER SHE GLANCES AT DONNA LUCIA FOR HER APPROVAL)

ELA

Auntie! (LORD FANCOURT AND ELA MOVE R TO C, ARM IN ARM)

DONNA LUCIA

(TO JACK) Now, where's my son?

JACK

(TURNS TO DONNA LUCIA) Here, "mamma"!

DONNA LUCIA

I shall have to talk to you very seriously before I give you this. (SHE INDICATES THE LETTER) Charley, (TURNING TO CHARLEY) I'll never forgive you if you deceive that sweet girl again! (AMY AND CHARLEY SMILE AT EACH OTHER) And as for you, (TURNING TO LORD FANCOURT) sir-- (HARPSICHORD MUSIC, AS FOR THE END OF ACT ONE, STARTS--VERY FAINTLY)

LORD FANCOURT

Oh no, never again, I give you my word. I'll give you the clothes if you like, I've done with them. Miss Delahay has consented to think me over as a husband, and in future I resign to Sir Francis Chesney (INDICATES SIR FRANCIS) --all claims to "Charley's Aunt." (MUSIC SWELLS; THE COUPLES TURN TO EACH OTHER AND FREEZE IN TABLEAU. SEE FIGURE 12. AFTER A THREE-COUNT, THE LIGHTS FADE QUICKLY, AND THE CURTAIN FALLS. HOUSE LIGHTS UP, AND MUSIC CUTS OFF AT CLIMAX)

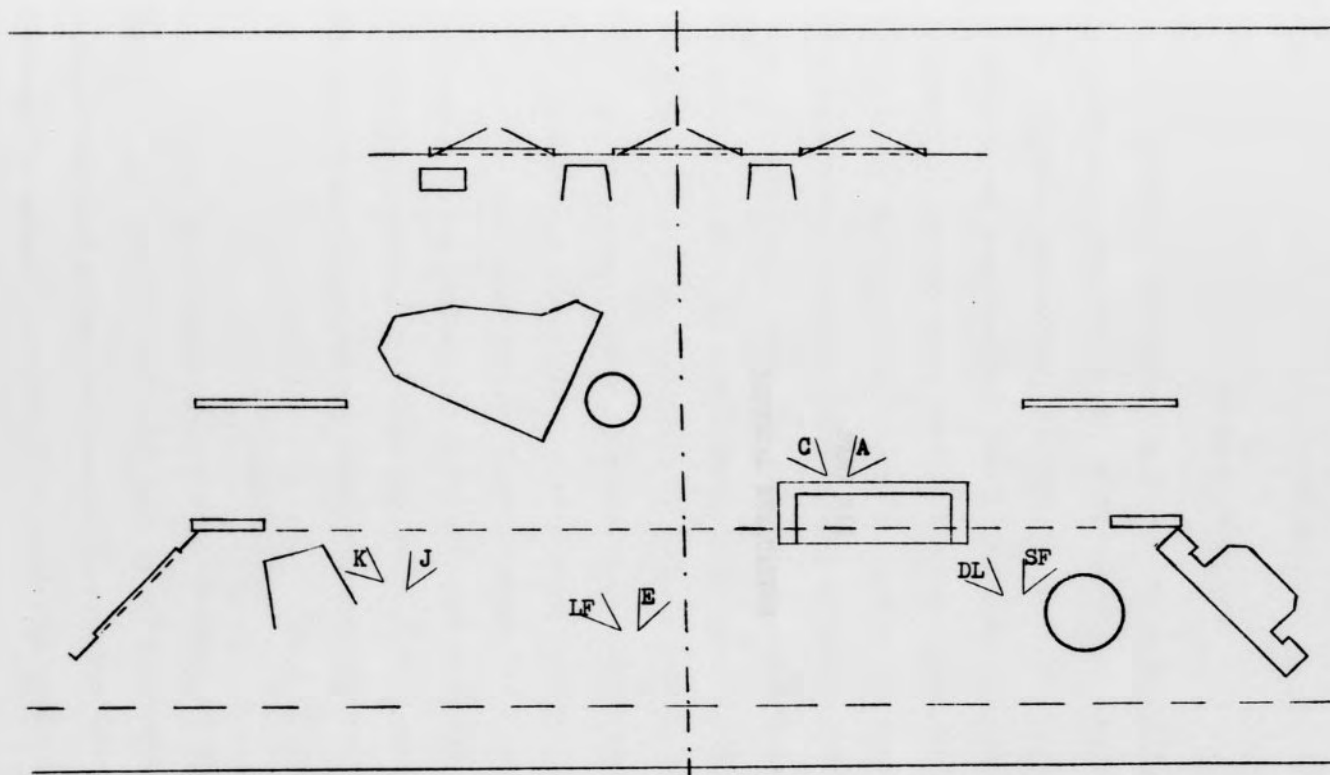


FIGURE 12

CHARLEY'S AUNT: ACT III

SCALE: $3/8" = 1'$

CRITICAL EVALUATION

PART III

CRITICAL EVALUATION

THE PLAYERS

PART III

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Audiences were extremely responsive to Charley's Aunt in spite of their small size. It is very difficult to play comedy to a house less than even one-quarter full, but the cast rose to the challenge with skill and determination, and the audiences were far from disappointed. On the whole, most of the cast played their roles consistently throughout the season, in spite of the many other pressures they were facing. Technical crews worked extraordinarily hard in the face of unusual challenges. The director was, nevertheless, not entirely happy with all performances, much less so with one particularly inconsistent actor who contributed largely to problems with Act I of the play. In general, though, the production must be considered more than satisfactory in the light of challenges faced and mostly overcome.

The final part of this thesis analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the production, as the director sees them. It places emphasis on audiences, technical challenges, acting achievements and the play itself, assessing the overall accomplishment.

Audience Response

Quite considerable trouble taken to avoid any possible sightline problems--so that every seat in the house would have an equally good view of the performance--was possibly wasted time, for although the company hoped for full houses, the result was comparatively

disappointing. However, this was the first time the venture had been tried, and the numbers who did attend were sufficient to convince the management to continue it in future years, not unreasonably building a regular attendance in a gradual fashion. In 1973, audience attendance was only fair, averaging about 100 per performance for the entire season, and slightly more than this for performances of Charley's Aunt --understandably, as comedy normally has greater box office attraction than serious drama or opera.

The two Sunday matinees had the lowest attendances, especially the first one, so perhaps it was a mistake to assume the public would choose the theatre on a summer afternoon; the schedule is being reconsidered for 1974. It is significant, however, that houses for Charley's Aunt grew considerably as the season progressed. Those who attended gave every indication of thoroughly enjoying the fare, and of agreeing with the review by Joe Knox which said the play "provided two hours of thoroughly delightful comedy, easy to take on a balmy summer's night, and yet it has staying power. You're not likely to forget it."²⁵

Technical Areas

This production of Charley's Aunt took place in the premiere season of UNC-G Summer Repertory Theatre, so no traditions or procedures had been established. General guidelines were used in developing schedules for building sets, finishing costumes, the collection and construction of properties, and so on, but these were

²⁵Joe Knox, review of Charley's Aunt, by Brandon Thomas, in Greensboro Daily News, 28 June 1973.

guidelines the company anticipated as suitable, not tested ones. Few of the company had ever participated in Repertory before, although many of the staff had had wide experience in various types of theatres.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of staging a season of Repertory theatre from the technical point of view is the initial mounting of a number of productions in a very short space of time. Productions in university or professional theatre, summer stock, or indeed any type of theatre other than Repertory, are generally geared to the opening of one show. A last minute concentrated effort to complete decorative elements of the set, for example, will usually achieve the desired effect, but when designers and crews are concerned with three productions and six sets, a plan of action needs to be more comprehensive and more ordered. Last minute spurts of energy are insufficient--ideally, they are undesirable in any theatre situation--for there is always the next show.

Charley's Aunt did not suffer a great deal from this, since it was the first show to open. However, this director found it embarrassing to have to ask his actors to deal with a door in the Act II set they had never seen before opening night, one still wet with paint, and in any case, not functioning properly; the door was particularly important to some of the business. The trees in Act II did not appear until after technical rehearsals, nor did the very necessary pedestal for the Act I table. The Act II set was not in fact finally decorated until the fourth performance.

Properties also caused considerable inconvenience. They were the responsibility of the Assistant Stage Manager who was most efficient

in producing substitutes for early rehearsals, but had considerable difficulty in amassing the actual properties to be used for performances. The blame can largely be laid with the Repertory Company itself, for this person's further responsibilities included finding properties for the other two productions as well, and standing in for the Stage Manager--and keeping the prompt book--at all rehearsals of Charley's Aunt. This was clearly far too diversified a series of duties for one person, and there was just insufficient time for this--unpaid--member of the company to perform all tasks effectively. Particularly annoying were the unworkable bag and dearth of champagne bottles for Act I. When these latter had still not been produced within forty-five minutes of curtain time on the opening night, the director sent out for cheap sparkling wine in champagne-type bottles which were emptied and became satisfactory props. He regrets his failure to take this action earlier.

In general, settings, properties and furniture were incomplete for the technical rehearsals, and in the case of some articles, dress rehearsals; this caused considerable problems for the cast. They had had, in any case, only one prior rehearsal on stage so that set building might continue; it was running well behind schedule. The director believes that inadequacies in such technical areas affected performances, and promoted a sense of insecurity among the cast which doubtless had an adverse effect on the production; it started at technical rehearsals and never completely vanished.

The director wishes he had taken a firmer stand with respect to the technical aspects of Charley's Aunt. He also held the position of

Associate Director of the Company, and he believes these management responsibilities may have given him a bias toward the season as a whole, rather than concentrating his efforts and bringing pressure to bear on his own production. He was continually aware of the problems of mounting three shows of considerable requirements in the way of design in such a short time, and could see difficulties developing early in the construction period. Nevertheless, he should have taken more action than he did, particularly in the area of properties. Difficulties were eventually cleared away, but not without considerable loss of cast morale.

One aspect of the settings for all three productions which had to be given quite some consideration, was the necessity of changing sets between productions performed in rotation. This was ingeniously worked out in terms of portability and storage, and of many pieces of scenery, often of considerable weight and dimension. The huge wagons used for the production of The Night of the Iguana, for example, fitted neatly into wing space without interfering with performances of Charley's Aunt.

Also on the credit side, set designs were excellently conceived and extremely workable. The director found it easy to block his play and was particularly happy with the effectiveness of furniture arrangements and ground plans. The settings, at least for the first and third acts, captured the light, airy mood he wished to project as the mood of the play, with a suitable air of opulence to the final setting. Difficulties with some properties have to be weighed against the very considerable number of properties required--complete table settings for

Act I, for example--and the efficiency with which the Assistant Stage Manager supplied most of the props, and substitutes of some sort from very early in the rehearsal period.

Costuming for Charley's Aunt was, the director believes, one of the most efficient and successful aspects of the production. The approach to the period was one of suggestion, which paralleled the director's approach to manners and acting style, and character relationships were clearly shown through a subtle but effective use of colour. The suggestion that the young men had three different outfits each was cleverly worked out, and gave the right impression that the time of day had changed with each act. In fact, no character gave the appearance of wearing less than two outfits. The clothes were extremely elegant, which fitted in well with a production which stressed subtlety rather than the broader elements of playing. Babbs' dress, for the role of the aunt from Brazil, was a particularly difficult piece to design, and after modifications in the rehearsal period it worked well, allowing him to undress on stage, then submit to being hastily reattired in full view of the audience.

Lighting the play had to be designed and plotted keeping in mind two other productions which would be alternating in performance. Fortunately, Charley's Aunt does not call for special effects, and the director required basically only clear visibility, and a warmth of mood suitable to the nature of the farce. This was achieved without any great conflict with the plots for the other shows, the only difficulty being a dim upstage area in Act III. It occurred because of the necessity of flying the French windows on a pipe further upstage than

was originally planned, in order to accomodate the other sets in the fly gallery. In any case, the majority of the action was downstage of this area, and the director felt that as the French windows led out onto an exterior, and the act was played in the evening, that a dim upstage area would enhance, rather than detract from, the scene.

Sound cues were efficiently executed for the play, but again no difficult effects were required. Harpsichord music by Bach was used to close each act with the light feeling projected during the scene: "Concerto in the Italian Style". Acts I and III opened with a harpsichord rendition of the prescribed "Eton Boating Song", echoing the pranks of the young men. It was a recording especially prepared for this production. As Act II introduced the new element of the real Donna Lucia, a more gracious note was struck with its introduction: Telemann's "Concerto in B-flat for 3 Oboes and 3 Violins". Sound and Lighting, therefore, posed few problems.

On the whole, all technical aspects of the production worked extraordinarily well, in the light of the problems encountered in Repertory. The director regrets only the Act II set which was never completed in the manner he understood as the designer's conception, and the problems of technical and dress rehearsals which had the unfortunate effect of disturbing some of the cast.

Acting

The Repertory theatre did not only have an influence on technical areas of the production, however. The actors were very much affected by the nature of the season, and the director is unconvinced

he did the most he could have done to assist them. He believes he was well aware of the problems for the actor inherent in first-time participation in Repertory, but feels he made insufficient effort to ascertain whether his cast had foreseen the same problems, and was coping with them.

The rehearsal schedule was necessarily very limited, allowing for only nineteen rehearsals prior to technical rehearsals, and the schedule had to be carefully conceived with all productions in mind. However, quite often a cast member playing two roles might have some six or seven hours of continuous rehearsals in one day, as well as a commitment to learning his book. Most actors had the responsibility of playing two roles, and the actor playing Charley had to cope with two particularly large parts. The director was especially concerned with maintaining cast morale, and with seeing that each actor had sufficient opportunity to deal with all his work. The burden naturally fell more heavily on a few of the cast rather than on others. So, at two in the morning, after an unsatisfactory series of technical and dress rehearsals, some of the actors were anxious to run the show again to smooth over the difficulties, but others were clearly incapable of doing so. The director made the decision to relinquish a further rehearsal which was sorely needed. In fact, because of the pressures on the cast toward the end of the rehearsal period, he was reluctant to call additional rehearsals of any sort.

Thus, while aware of the problems of tiredness associated with creating two roles simultaneously, the director believes he neither put sufficient emphasis on this to the cast--who might have used free time

to better effect--nor utilized available time in the early part of the rehearsal period to the best advantage. He failed to see it would have been better to reach performance pitch in rehearsals at an earlier than normal point, and resurrect the show after the difficulties of technical and dress rehearsals. In fact, the cast were brought to performance level only at the final rehearsal or two prior to technical rehearsals, and this meant they were not up to both coping with technical problems and maintaining the pitch through this difficult period. Some performances, therefore, lacked all the finer polish the director would have liked.

In addition, maintaining a role in Repertory for a period of four weeks was another challenge for the actor. Some performances of Charley's Aunt were spaced a considerable distance apart, which meant that additional rehearsals were necessary, and these were generally effective in reviving the spirit of the play. There was, however, one exception. No brush-up rehearsal was held between the second performance, on Friday evening, and the third performance--the first Sunday matinee. The latter was a particular disappointment; pace and timing were erratic on this occasion, and even the production style was unclear. Embarrassed, the director much regretted his decision not to hold a rehearsal. This decision had been made in the belief that the cast were far too tired with two shows opening that week, extensive technical and dress rehearsals, and four performances already in that time; another rehearsal seemed just too much. However, the listlessness and inconsistency could largely have been avoided by even a line rehearsal on Saturday or Sunday to keep the necessary excitement in the air until

after the matinee, then allowing the cast some relaxation before working towards the next performance almost a week later. Once again, the director was aware of a problem in general terms, but overlooked it in a specific instance. Not surprisingly, extensive work was planned for the following week, and no such disappointment occurred again.

On the whole, however, the actors were able to cope particularly well with the demands on their time and energy, and with the frustration of technical difficulties. The director was aware of the diversity of his cast in terms of experience and background, and attempted to instill an attitude of responsibility in the cast. He expected them to make substantial contributions to developing their characters, and working out suitable business in various scenes. Surprisingly, this attitude had a much better effect on the less experienced members of the cast who were extraordinarily creative and cooperative, but one or two of the more experienced actors eventually saw it as a flippant diversion, rather than an opportunity for a creative contribution. A further complication: this attitude was thoroughly concealed from the director at rehearsals, which were conducted in a professionally efficient manner, and did not make itself evident to him until after technical rehearsals. Unfortunately, this was a contributing factor to friction within the cast, variously directed at one particular member, and at others whom some cast members felt were beneath so-called professional status, and comparatively inadequate. Such feelings were not allowed to interfere with rehearsals, but are always detrimental to a production, and the director regrets he was unable to re-establish the esprit de corps once it had been lost.

Perhaps the director expected too much of a cast of graduate and undergraduate students (from other areas as well as the theatre discipline), townsmen and young professionals, in expecting them all to come together without some degree of conflict. The director is grateful that he was able to keep it largely subdued.

Two cast members were hired through an advertisement in Backstage, and this meant that neither had auditioned for the director prior to the general tryouts at the start of the rehearsal period. The director was surprised to discover the actress hired for Kitty ignorant of the most elementary techniques of stage movement, and its terminology. Blocking rehearsals with this actress were quite a trial, as were later rehearsals where she had to be coached in line readings and simple gesture, and time wasted here was resented by other members of the cast. However, those who had the most work to do with Kitty, like Jack and Amy, displayed great patience; it was one or two cast members on the sidelines who instigated resentment. The director realised he had made a mistake in casting, by hiring an extremely highly-strung actress, but he determined to cope with the situation, convinced he could make her into an acceptable Kitty. He was far from disappointed, as she was indeed physically and vocally suited to the role, and with much guidance, rose to the challenge.

On the other hand, the actor hired in the same manner--to play Lord Fancourt Babberley--displayed a concerned attitude to his part in this production--even though he insisted on relinquishing too small a role in The Night of the Iguana--and appeared to be working efficiently in rehearsals for Charley's Aunt. His character developed more and more

along the lines the director had in mind, and he handled difficult business with aplomb, appearing thoroughly versed in the technical skills of his profession. In an effort to come to terms with final rehearsals on stage, the director encouraged this actor to exaggerate his performance slightly. The subtleties which were effectively amusing in Aycock basement rehearsals were, apparently, unequal to the demands of the theatre in Taylor Building, at least for this character who had the broadest image to project. The actor proved unequal to the task, and the result was a general inconsistency in performance, in spite of specific directions as to how far to go. This role was played jerkily, and varied greatly in each performance, hardly an asset to the precision of farce. Although the director should have foreseen the problem earlier, he does not believe his suggestion was so radical as to be responsible for the erratic playing which resulted. However, this is far from a condemnation of the actor's work, for he brought many excellent attributes to the character of Babbs, and was clearly well-received by audiences.

In appearance, the cast were an excellent group, and related well to one another. They all mastered the suggestion of English voices required, and on the whole gave the director's conception of a suitably presentational acting style a clear interpretation. They worked hard at developing their characters and perfecting the precision in playing demanded of them.

As the director mentioned in Part I, he was anxious to find an especially talented actor for the role of Jack, which has little to offer apart from the lion's share of the exposition. He was delighted with

his choice. This actor not only brought particular dimension to what can be a very shallow role, but he showed an instinctive grasp of the production style to the rest of the players; his acting in rehearsals was instrumental as an example for the cast. They mastered presentational technique, foreign to most of them, and conveyed the spirit of the play as the director interpreted it.

The Play

As was pointed out in Part I as well, Charley's Aunt has several weaknesses in its structure. While the play exhibits extraordinary reliance on its first act to set the events in motion, these events slow down at later points for further exposition, or just more leisurely progression. In rehearsal, the director became increasingly aware of the necessity for Act I to put the audience in the right mood, to seize their interest, and promote their amusement. If, he decided, the audience were not totally captured during the first act, the remainder of the play would have little opportunity of enchanting them.

The early part of the act consists of exposition, the introduction of various characters, and setting up the situation. It is not until Babbs is trapped into masquerading as Charley's aunt that the action is really underway. So it is essential that Babbs project the right spirit of devil-may-care bravado and good-humoured mischief from the moment he makes his first entrance climbing through Jack's window after champagne. Only then will the audience respond readily enough to his crazy disguise; they will respond because it is a character they already find both amusing and wickedly admirable. Although the director

considers all performances of Act I to have been successful, he does not believe the maximum laughs were always extracted because, as discussed earlier in this part, Babbs was uncomfortable in his role and often inconsistent in his playing--partly the director's fault in his handling of the actor. So the cast had a harder than necessary task in conveying the right spirit of good fun to their audience.

Contemporary audiences are rarely prepared to appreciate sentimental dialogue for its own sake, especially when it follows lively comedy, as in the major Ela scenes of the second and third acts. The director wanted to avoid the obvious method of dealing with these scenes--burlesquing them--because he believed points important to the plot would be obscured. Neither could he play them for their full romantic appeal, as their positions in the text would make them stand out with unacceptable inaptness to a non-Victorian audience. Hence he determined on a comparatively matter-of-fact playing which he believed would not be startlingly incongruous. The appeal of the two scenes should lie in their plot elements, with interest centering on the expository elements in Act II, and the artless revelations of Ela's love, to the very man who is the object of it, in Act III. Both scenes are amusing; neither is riotously funny. The director believes he achieved his aim in establishing a smooth rhythm even through these problem scenes, and avoided the possibility of either an apparent slowing of the action and humour, or an interpolation of burlesque elements which carry the scenes, but with attendant obscurity of plot. Arguments such as this are part of the justification for the overall production style.

Final Thoughts

The director considers he achieved the farcical style of production and at the same time sufficient intimacy with the audience that he anticipated, and believes he has strong justification for producing the play in this manner. Productions of Charley's Aunt which stress the broader elements of farce disintegrate too easily into burlesque, and the play has much to recommend stress on the more controlled elements of the style. Although belly laughs may have been lost, the continuing chuckles and laughter of the audience were ample acknowledgment of the production's excellent reception. Plot and characters were presented with remarkable clarity, and smoothness in the overall performance was attained.

By way of self-criticism, the director believes he may have stressed the subtlety of the playing to the extent that the production approached a high comedy style, for which there is insufficient wit in the dialogue. On the other hand, he sympathizes little with the regret of one member of the audience who said she was disappointed in the scene with the champagne bottles; when she saw the play at her nephew's High School, they dropped the bag on the floor so that the bottles rolled out, and it was ever so funny! Such reactions were anticipated as a hazard in the pre-production analysis. The director's regrets concern the relatively small audiences (and numbers really do make a difference to the appreciation of farce), problems associated with the Repertory itself in both acting and technical areas, and the failure to always make the most of Act I.

However, he considers the production an extraordinarily worthwhile achievement. A farce which too often achieves success by being burlesqued was given a polish and a refinement not inconsistent with the Victorian upper classes in England, and scenes of some delicacy in the play thus appeared consistent with the whole, rather than incongruous and unintelligible diversions. Fine acting performances, and excellently talented design work fitted most appropriately with the director's conception of the play, to present a unified and sophisticated version of Charley's Aunt as the first production of the UNC-G Summer Repertory Theatre.

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APPENDIX

